THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

(JONATHAN SWIFT)

Edited with notes by
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THE BOOKSELLER TO THE READER

The following Discourse, as it is unquestionably of the same author, so it seems to have been written about thesame time with the former ; I mean the year 1697, when the famous dispute was on foot about ancient and modern learning. The controversy took its rise from an essay of Sir William Temple's upon that subject, which was answered by W. Wotton, B.D., with an Appendix by Dr. Bentley, endeavouring to destroy the credit of Æsop and Phalaris for authors, whom Sir William Temple had, in the essay before mentioned, highly commended. In that appendix, the doctor falls hard upon a new edition of Phalaris, put out by the Honourable Charles Boyle, now Earl of Orrery, to which Mr. Boyle replied at large, with great learning and wit ; and the doctor voluminously rejoined. In this dispute, the town highly resented to see a person of Sir William Temple's character and merits roughly used by the two reverend gentlemen aforesaid, and without any manner of provocation. At length, there appearing no end of the quarrel, our author tells us, that the books in St. James's Library, looking upon themselves as parties principally concerned, took up the controversy, and came to a decisive battle ; but the manuscript, by the injury of fortune or weather, being in several places imperfect, we cannot learn to which side the victory fell.

I must warn the reader to beware of applying to persons what is here meant only of books, in the most literal sense. So, when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understand the person of a famous poet called by the name ; but only certain sheets of paper, bound up in leather, containing in print the works of the said poet : and so of the rest.

THE PREFACE OF THE AUTHOR

Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own ; which is the chief

reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it. But, if it should happen otherwise, the danger is not great ; and I have learned, from long experience, never to apprehend mischief from those understandings I have been able to provoke : for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and impotent.

There is a brain that will endure but one scumming ; let the owner gather it with discretion, and manage his little stock with husbandry ; but, of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the lash of his betters, because that will make it all bubble into impertinence, and he will find no new supply. Wit, without knowledge, being a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and, by a skilful hand, may be soon whipped into froth ; but once scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing but to be thrown to the hogs.

A FULL AND TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE FOUGHT LAST FRIDAY, ETC.

Whoever examines with due circumspection into the *Annual Records of Time* will find it remarked, that war is the child of pride, and pride the daughter of riches. The former of which assertions may be soon granted, but one cannot so easily subscribe to the latter; for pride is nearly related to beggary and want, either by father or mother, and sometimes by both: and, to speak naturally, it very seldom happens among men to fall out when all have enough; invasions usually travelling from north to south, that is to say, from poverty upon plenty. The most ancient and natural grounds of quarrels are lust and avarice; which, though we may allow to be brethren, or collateral branches of pride, are certainly the issues of want. For, to speak in the phrase of writers upon the politics, we may observe in the Republic of Dogs (which, in its original, seems to be an institution of the many), that the whole state is ever in the profoundest peace after a full meal; and that civil broils arise among them when it happens for one great bone to be seized on by some leading dog, who either divides it among the few, and then it falls to an oligarchy, or keeps it to himself, and then it runs up to a tyranny. The same reasoning also holds place among them in those dissensions we behold upon a turgescency in any of their females. For the right of possession lying in common (it being impossible to establish a property in so delicate a case), jealousies and suspicions do so abound, that the whole commonwealth of that street is reduced to a manifest state of war, of every citizen agains every citizen, till some one, of more courage, conduct, or fortune than the rest, seizes and enjoys the prize; upon which naturally arises plenty of heart-burning, and envy, and snarling against the happy dog. Again, if we look upon of these republics engaged in a foreign war, either of invasion or defence, we shall find the same reasoning will serve as to the grounds and occasions of each, and that poverty or want in some degree or other

(whether real or in opinion, which makes no alteration in the case), has a great share, as well as pride, on the part of the aggressor.

Now, whoever will please to take this scheme, and either reduce or adapt it to an intellectual state, or commonwealth of learning, will soon discover the first ground of disagreement between the two great parties at this time in arms, and may form just conclusions upon the merits of either cause. But the issue or events of this war are not so easy to conjecture at ; for the present quarrel is so inflamed by the warm heads of either faction, and the pretensions somewhere or other so exorbitant, as not to admit the least overtures of accommodation. This quarrel first began (as I have heard it affirmed by an old dweller in the neighbourhood) about a small spot of ground, lying and being upon one of the two tops of the hill Parnassus ; the highest and largest of which had, it seems, been time out of mind in quiet possession of certain tenants, called the Ancients, and the other was held by the Moderns. But these, disliking their present station, sent certain ambassadors to the Ancients, complaining of a great nuisance ; how the height of that part of Parnassus quite spoiled the prospect of theirs, especially towards the east ; and therefore, to avoid a war, offered them the choice of this alternative—either that the Ancients would please to remove themselves and their effects down to the lower summity, which the Moderns would graciously surrender to them, and advance in their place ; or else that the said Ancients will give leave to the Moderns to come with shovels and mattocks, and level the said hill as low as they shall think it convenient. To which the Ancients made answer, how little they expected such a message as this from a colony whom they had admitted, out of their own free grace, to so near a neighbourhood. That, as to their own seat, they were aborgines of it, and therefore to talk with them of a removal or surrender, was a language they did not understand. That if the height of the hill on their side shortened the prospect of the Moderns, it was a disadvantage they could not help, but desired them to consider, whether that injury (if it be any) were not largely recompensed by the shade and shelter it afforded them. That as to the levelling or digging down, it was either folly or ignorance to propose it, if they did, or did

not know, how that side of the hill was an entire rock, which would break their tools and hearts, without any damage to itself. That they would therefore advise the Moderns rather to raise their own side of the hill, than dream of pulling down that of the Ancients ; to the former of which they would not only give licence, but also largely contribute. All this was rejected by the Moderns with much indignation, who still insisted upon one of the two expedients ; and so this difference broke out into a long and obstinate war, maintained on the one part by resolution and by the courage of certain leaders and allies ; but on the other, by the greatness of their number, upon all defeats, affording continual recruits. In this quarrel whole rivulets of ink have been exhausted, and the virulence of both parties enormously augmented. Now, it must here be understood, that ink is the great missive weapon in all battles of the learned, which, conveyed through a sort of engine called a quill, infinite numbers of these are darted at the enemy, by the valiant on each side, with equal skill and violence, as if it were an engagement of porcupines. This malignant liquor was compounded, by the engineer who invented it, of two ingredients, which are gall and copperas, by its bitterness and venom to suit in some degree, as well as to foment, the genius of the combatants. And as the Grecians, after an engagement, when they could not agree about the victory, were wont to set up trophies on both sides, the beaten party being content to be at the same expense, to keep itself in countenance (a laudable and ancient custom, happily revived of late, in the art of war), so the learned, after a sharp and bloody dispute, do on both sides hang out their trophies too, whichever comes by the worse. These trophies have largely inscribed on them the merits of the cause, a full impartial account of such a battle, and how the victory fell clearly to the party that set them up. They are known to the world under several names; as disputes, arguments, rejoinders, brief considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections, confutations. For a very few days they are fixed up in all public places, either by themselves or their representatives, for passengers to gaze at; from whence the chiefest and largest are removed to certain magazines they call libraries, there to remain in a quarter purposely assigned them, and from thenceforth begin to be called books of Controversy.

In these books is wonderfully instilled and preserved the spirit of each warrior, while he is alive ; and after his death his soul transmigrates there to inform them. This at least is the more common opinion ; but I believe it is with libraries as with other cemeteries, where some philosophers affirm that a certain spirit, which they call *brutum hominis*, hovers over the monument till the body is corrupted and turns to dust or to worms, but then vanishes or dissolves. So, we may say, a restless spirit haunts over every book, till dust or worms have seized upon it, which to some may happen in a few days, but to others later ; and, therefore, books of controversy being, of all others, haunted by the most disorderly spirits, have always been confined in a separate lodge from the rest ; and, for fear of mutual violence against each other, it was thought prudent by our ancestors to bind them to the peace with strong iron chains. Of which invention the original occasion was this—When the works of Scotus first came out, they were carried to a certain great library and had lodgings appointed them ; but this author was no sooner settled than he went to visit his master Aristotle ; and there both concerted together to seize Plato by main force, and turn him out from his ancient station among the divines, where he had peaceably dwelt near eight hundred years. The attempt succeeded, and the two usurpers have reigned ever since in his stead : but to maintain quiet for the future, it was decreed, that all polemics of the larger size should be held fast with a chain.

By this expedient, the public peace of libraries might certainly have been preserved, if a new species of controversial books had not arose of late years, instinct with a most malignant spirit from the war above mentioned between the learned, about the higher summit of Parnassus.

When these books were first admitted into the public libraries, I remember to have said, upon occasion, to several persons concerned, how I was sure they would create broils wherever they came, unless a world of care were taken ; and therefore I advised, that the champions of each side should be coupled together, or otherwise mixed, that, like the blending of contrary poisons, their malignity might be employed among themselves. And it seems I was neither an ill prophet nor an

ill counsellor; for it was nothing else but the neglect of this caution which gave occasion to the terrible fight that happened on Friday last between the ancient and modern books in the King's Library. Now, because the talk of this battle is so fresh in everybody's mouth, and the expectation of the town so great to be informed in the particulars, I being possessed of all qualifications requisite in an historian, and retained by neither party, have resolved to comply with the urgent importunity of my friends, by writing down a full impartial account thereof.

The guardian of the regal library, a person of great valour, but chiefly renowned for his humanity, had been a fierce champion for the Moderns; and, in an engagement upon Parnassus, had vowed, with his own hands, to knock down two of the Ancient chiefs, who guarded a small pass on the superior rock; but, endeavouring to climb up, was cruelly obstructed by his own unhappy weight, and tendency towards his centre: a quality to which those of the Modern party are extreme subject; for, being light-headed, they have in speculation a wonderful agility, and conceive nothing too high for them to mount, but in reducing to practice discover a mighty pressure about their posteriors and their heels. Having thus failed in his design, the disappointed champion bore a cruel rancour to the Ancients, which he resolved to gratify by showing all marks of his favour to the books of their adversaries, and lodging them in the fairest apartments; when, at the same time, whatever book had the boldness to own itself for an advocate of the Ancients, was buried alive in some obscure corner, and threatened, upon the least displeasure, to be turned out of door. Besides, it so happened, that about this time there was a strange confusion of place among all the books in the library; for which several reasons were assigned. Some imputed it to a great heap of earned dust, which a perverse wind blew off from a shelf of Moderns into the keeper's eyes. Others affirmed he had a humour to pick the worms out of the schoolmen, and swallow them fresh and fasting; whereof some fell upon his spleen, and some climbed up into his head, to the great perturbation of both. And lastly, others maintained, that, by walking much in the dark about the library, he had quite lost the situation of it out of his head; and therefore in replacing his books he was apt to mistake, and clap Descartes

next to Aristotle ; poor Plato had got between Hobbes and the Seven Wise Masters, and Virgil was hemmed in with Dryden on one side and Withers on the other.

Meanwhile those books that were advocates for the Moderns chose out one from among them to make a progress through the whole library, examine the number and strength of their party, and concert their affairs. This messenger performed all things very industriously, and brought back with him a list of their forces, in all fifty thousand, consisting chiefly of light-horse, heavy-armed foot, and mercenaries; whereof the foot were in general but sorrily armed, and worse clad ; their horses large, but extremely out of case and heart ; however, some few, by trading among the Ancients, had furnished themselves tolerably enough.

While things were in this ferment, discord grew extremely high, hot words passed on both sides, and ill blood was plentifully bred. Here a solitary Ancient, squeezed up among a whole shelf of Moderns, offered fairly to dispute the case, and to prove by manifest reasons, that the priority was due them, from long possession, and in regard of their prudence, antiquity, and, above all, their great merits towards the Moderns. But these denied the premises, and seemed very much to wonder, how the Ancients could pretend to insist upon their antiquity, when it was so plain (if they went to that) that the Moderns were much the more ancient of the two. As for any obligations they owed to the Ancients, they renounced them all. ''Tis true', said they, 'we are informed, some few of our party have been so mean to borrow their subsistence from you ; but the rest, infinitely the greater number (and especially we French and English) were so far from stooping to so base an example, that there never passed, till this very hour, six words between us. For our horses are of our own breeding, our arms of our own forging, and our clothes of our own cutting and sewing.' Plato was by chance upon the next shelf, and observing those that spoke to be in the ragged plight mentioned a while ago, their jades lean and foundered, their weapons of rotten wood, their armour rusty, and nothing but rags underneath, he laughed loud, and in his pleasant way swore, by G—he believed them.

Now, the Moderns had not proceeded in their late negotiation with secrecy enough to escape the notice of the enemy. For those advocates, who had begun the quarrel by setting first on foot the dispute of precedency, talked so loud of coming to a battle, that Temple happened to overhear them, and gave immediate intelligence to the Ancients, who thereupon drew up their scattered troops together, resolving to act upon the defensive ; upon which, several of the Moderns fled over to their party, and among the rest Temple himself. This Temple, having been educated and long conversed among the Antients, was, of all the Moderns, their greatest favourite, and became their greatest champion.

Things were at this crisis, when a material accident fell out. For, upon the highest corner of a large window, there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant. The avenues to his castle were guarded with turnpikes and palisadoes, all after the modern way of fortification. After you had passed several courts, you came to the centre, wherein you might behold the constable himself in its own lodgings, which had windows fronting to each avenue, and ports to sally out, upon all occasions of prey or defence. In this mansion he had for some time dwelt in peace and plenty, without danger to his person by swallows from above, or to his palace by brooms from below ; when it was the pleasure of fortune to conduct thither a wandering bee, to whose curiosity a broken pane in the glass had discovered itself, and in he went ; where, expatiating a while, he at last happened to alight upon one of the outward walls of the spider's citadel ; which, yielding to the unequal weight, sunk down to the very foundation. Thrice he endeavoured to force his passage, and thrice the centre shook. The spider within, feeling the terrible convulsion, supposed at first that nature was approaching to her final dissolution ; or else that Beelzebub, with all his legions, was come to revenge the death of many thousands of his subjects, whom his enemy had slain and devoured. However, he at length valiantly resolved to issue forth, and meet his fate. Meanwhile the bee had acquitted himself of his toils, and, posted securely at some distance, was

employed in cleansing his wings, and disengaging them from the ragged remnants of the cobweb. By this time the spider was adventured out, when, beholding the chasms, the ruins, and dilapidations of his fortress, he was very near at his wit's end ; he stormed and swore like a madman, and swelled till he was ready to burst. At length, casting his eye upon the bee, and wisely gathering causes from events (for they knew each other by sigh) : 'A plague split you,' said he, 'for a giddy son of a whore. Is it you, with a vengeance, that have made this litter here ? Could not you look before you, and be d—d ? Do you think I have nothing else to do, in the devil's name, but to mend and repair after your arse ?'—'Good words, friend,' said the bee (having now pruned himself, and being disposed to droll), 'I'll give you my hand and word to come near your kennel no more ; I was never in such a confounded pickle since I was born '—'Sirrah', replied the spider, 'if it were not for breaking an old custom in our family, never to stir abroad against an enemy, I should come and teach you better manners.'—'I pray have patience,' said the bee, 'or you will spend your substance, and, for aught I see, you may stand in need of it all, towards the repair of your house.'—'Rogue, rogue,' replied the spider, 'yet methinks you should have more respect to a person, whom all the world allows to be so much your betters.'—'By my troth,' said the bee, 'the comparison will amount to a very good jest, and you will do me a favour to let me know the reasons that all the world is pleased to use in so hopeful a dispute.' At this the spider, having swelled himself into the size and posture of a disputant, began his argument in the true spirit of controversy, with a resolution to be heartily scurrilous and angry, to urge on his own reasons, without the least regard to the answers or objections of his opposite, and fully predetermined in his mind against all conviction.

'Not to disparage myself,' said he, 'by the comparison with such a rascal, what art thou but a vagabond without house or home, without stock or inheritance, born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings and a drone-pipe ? Your livelihood is an universal plunder upon nature ; a freebooter over fields and gardens ; and, for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as easily as a violet. Whereas I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle

(to show my improvements in the mathematics) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person.'

'I am glad,' answered the bee, 'to hear you grant at least that I am come honestly by my wings and my voice; for then, it seems, I am obliged to Heaven alone for my flights and my music; and Providence would never have bestowed on me two such gifts, without designing them for the noblest ends. I visit indeed all the flowers and blossoms of the field and the garden; but whatever I collect thence enriches myself, without the least injury to their beauty, their smell, or their taste. Now, for you and your skill in architecture and other mathematics, I have little to say: in that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labour and method enough; but, by woeful experience for us both, 'tis too plain, the materials are naught, and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter a s well as method and art. You boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out all from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and position in your breast; and, though I would by no means lessen or disparage your genuine stock of either, yet I doubt you are somewhat obliged, for an increase of both, to a little foreign assistance. Your inherent portion of dirt does not fail of acquisitions' by sweepings exhaled from below; and one insect furnishes you with a share of poison to destroy another. So that, in short, the question comes all to this—Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by an universal range, with long search, much study, true judgement, and distinction of things, bring home honey and wax.'

This dispute was managed with such eagerness, clamour, and warmth, that the two parties of books, in arms below, stood silent a while, waiting in suspense what would be the issue, which was not long undetermined: for the bee, growth impatient at so much loss of time, fled straight away to a bed of roses, without looking for a reply, and left the spider like

an orator, collected in himself and just prepared to burst out,

It happened upon this emergency, that Æsop broke silence first. He had been of late most barbarously treated by a strange effect of the regent's humanity, who had tore off his title-page, sorely defaced one half of his leaves, and chained him fast among a shelf of Moderns. Where, soon discovering how high the quarrel was like to proceed, he tried all his arts, and turned himself to a thousand forms. At length, in the borrowed shape of an ass, the regent mistook him for a Modern ; by which means he had time and opportunity to escape to the Ancients, just when the spider and the bee were entering into their contest, to which he gave his attention with a world of pleasure ; and when it was ended, swore in the loudest key, that in all his life he had never known two cases so parallel and adapt to each other, as that in the window, and this upon the shelves. 'The disputants,' said he, 'have admirably managed the dispute between them, have taken in the full strength of all that is to be said on both sides, and exhausted the substance of every argument *pro* and *con*. It is but to adjust the reasonings of both to the present quarrel, then to compare and apply the labours and fruits of each, as the bee has learnedly deduced them, and we shall find the conclusion fall plain and close upon the Moderns and us. For, pray, gentlemen, was ever anything so modern as the spider, in his air, his turns, and his paradoxes ? He argues in the behalf of you his brethren and himself, with many boastings of his native stock and great genius, that he spins and spits wholly from himself, and scorns to own any obligation or assistance from without. Then he displays to you his great skill in architecture, and improvement in the mathematics. To all this the bee, as an advocate retained by us the Ancients, thinks fit to answer—that, if one may judge of the great genius or inventions of the Moderns by what they have produced, you will hardly have countenance to bear you out in boasting of either. Erect your schemes with as much method and skill as you please ; yet if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your own entrails (the guts of modern brains), the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb, the duration of which, like that of other spiders' webs, may be

imputed to their being forgotten, or neglected, or hid in a corner. For anything else of genuine that the Moderns may pretend to, I cannot recollect; unless it be a large vein of wrangling and satire, much of a nature and substance with the spider's poison; which, however, they pretend to spit wholly out of themselves, is improved by the same arts, by feeding upon the insects and vermin of the age. As for us the Ancients, we are content with the bee to pretend to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice, that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.'

'Tis wonderful to conceive the tumult arisen among the books, upon the close of this long descant of Æesop; both parties took the hint, and heightened their animosities so on a sudden, that they resolved it should come to a battle. Immediately the two main bodies withdrew, under their several ensign, to the farther parts of the library, and there entered into cabals and consults upon the present emergency. The Moderns were in very warm debates upon the choice of their leaders; and nothing less than the fear impending from their enemies, could have kept them from mutinies upon this occasion. The difference was greatest among the horse, where every private trooper pretended to the chief command, from Tasso and Milton to Dryden and Withers. The light-horse were commanded by Cowley and Despreaux. There came the bowmen under their valiant leaders, Descartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes, whose strength was such that they could shoot their arrows beyond the atmosphere, never to fall down again, but turn, like that of Evander, into meteors, or, like the cannon-ball, into stars. Paracelsus brought a squadron of stink-pot-flingers from the snowy mountains of Rhaetia. There came a vast body of dragoons, of different nations, under the leading of Harvey, their great aga: part armed with scythes, the weapons of death; part with lances and long knives, all steeped in pioson: part shot bullets of a most malignant nature, and used white powder, which infallibly killed without

report. There came several bodies of heavy-armed foot, all mercenaries, under the ensigns of Guicciardini, Davila, Polydore Virgil, Buchanan, Mariana. Camden, and others. The engineers were commanded by Regiomontanus and Wilkins. The rest were a confused multitude, led by Scotus, Aquinas, and Bellarmine ; of mighty bulk and stature,obut without either arms, courage, or discipiine. In the last place, came infinite swarms, of calones, a disorderly rout led by L' Estrange, and regamuffins, that follow the camp for nothing but the plunder, all without coats to cover them.

The army of the Ancients was much fewer in number ; Homer led the horse, and Pindar the light-horse ; Euclid was chief engineer ; Plato and Aristotle commanded the bowmen ; Herodotus and Livy the foot ; Hippocrates the dragoons. The allies, led by Vossius and Temple, brought up the rear.

All things violently tending to a decisive battle, Fame, who much frequented, and had a large apartment formerly assigned her in the regal library, fled up straight to Jupiter, to whom she delivered a faithfnl account of all that had passed between the two parties below. (For among the gods, she always tells truth.) Jove, in great concern, convokes a council in the Milky Way. The senate assembled, he declares the occasion of convening them ; a bloody battle just impendent between two mighty armies of Ancient and Modern creatures, called books. wherein the celestial interest was but too deeply concerned. Momus, the patron of the Moderns, made an excellent speech in their favour, which was answered by Pallas, the protectress of the Ancients. The assembiy was divided in their affections ; when Jupiter commanded the book of fate to be laid before him. Immediately were brought by Mercury three large volumes in folio, containing memoirs of all things past, present, and to come. The clasps were of silver, double gilt ; the covers of celestial turkey leather ; and the paper such as here on earth might almost pass for vellum. Jupiter, having silently read the decree, would communicate the impart to none, but presently shut up the book.

Without the doors of this assembly, there attended a vast number of light, nimble gods, menial servants to Jupiter : these are his ministering instruments in all affairs below. They

travel in a caravan, more or less together, and are fastened to each other, like a link of galley-slaves, by a light chain, which passes from them to Jupiter's great toe; and yet, in receiving or delivering a massage, they may never approach above the lowest step of his throne, where he and they whisper to each other, through a long hollow trunk. These deities are called by mortal men accidents or events; but the gods call them second causes. Jupiter having delivered his massage to a certain number of these divinities, they flew immediately drawn to the pinnacle of the regal library, and, consulting a few minutes, entered unseen and disposed the parties according to their orders.

Meanwhile, Momus, fearing the worst, and calling to mind an ancient prophecy, which bore no very good face to his children the Moderns, bent his flight to the region of a malignant deity, called Critcism. She dwelt on the top of a snowy mountain in Nova Zembla; there Momus found her extended in her den, upon the spoils of numberless volumes half devoured. At her right hand sat Ignorance, her father and husband, blind with age; at her left, Pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper herself had torn. There was Opinion, her sister, light of foot, hoodwinked, and head-strong, yet giddy, and perpetually turning. About her played her children Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry, and Ill-manners. The goddess herself had claws like a cat; her head, and ears, and voice, resembled those of an ass; her teeth fallen out before, her eyes turned inward, as if she looked only upon herself; her diet was the over-flowing of her own gall; her spleen was so large, as to stand prominent like a dug of the first rate; nor wanted excrescencies in form of teats, at which a crew of ugly monsters were greedily sucking; and, what is wonderful to conceive, the bulk of spleen increased faster than the sucking could diminish it. 'Goddess,' said Momus, 'can you sit idly here while our devout worshippers, the Moderns, are this minute entering into a cruel battle, and perhaps now lying under the swords of their enemies? Who then hereafter will ever sacrifice or build altars to our divinities? Haste, therefore, to the British Isle, and, if possible, prevent their destruction; while I make factions among the gods, and gain them over to our party;

Momus, having thus delivered himself, stayed not for an answer, but left the goddess to her own resentment. Up she rose in a rage, and, as it is the form upon such occasions, began a soliloquy : ' 'Tis I,' (said she) 'who give wisdom to infants and idiots ; by me, children grow wiser than their parents ; by me, beaux become politicians, and school.boys judges of philosophy ; by me, sophisters debate, and conclude upon the depths of knowledge ; and coffeehouse wits, instinct by me, can correct an author's style and display his minutest errors, without understanding a syllable of his matter or his language. By me, striplings spend their judgement, as they do their estate, before it comes into their hands. 'Tis I who have deposed wit and knowledge from their empire over poetry, and advanced myself in their stead. And shall a few upstart Ancients dare oppose me ?—But come, my aged parents and you, my children dear, and thou, my beauteous sister ; let us ascend my chariot, and haste to assist our devout Moderns, who are now sacrificing to us a hecatomb, as I perceive by that grateful smell, which from thence reaches my nostrils.'

The goddess and her train having mounted the chariot, which was drawn by tame geese, flew over infinite regions, shedding her influence in due places, till at length she arrived at her beloved island of Britain ; but in hovering over its metropolis, what blessings did she not let fall upon her seminaries of Gresham and Covent Garden ! And now she reached the fatal plain of St. James's Library, at what time the two armies were upon the point to engage ; where, entering with all her caravan unseen, and landing upon a case of shelves, now desert, but once inhabited by a colony of virtuosoes, she stayed a while to observe the posture of both armies.

But here the tender cares of a mother began to fill her thoughts, and move in her breast. For, at the head of a troop of Modern Bowmen, she cast her eyes upon her son W-tt-n ; to whom the fates had assigned a very short thread. W-tt-n, a young hero, whom an unknown father of mortal race begot by stolen embraces with this goddess. He was the darling of his mother above all her children, and she resolved to go and comfort him. But first, according to the good old custom of deities, she cast about to change her shape, for fear

the divinity of her countenance might dazzle his mortal sight, and overcharge the rest of his senses. She therefore gathered up her person into an octavo compass ; her body grew white and arid, and split in pieces with dryness ; the thick turned into pasteboard, and the thin into paper, upon which her parents and children artfully strewed a black juice, or decoction of gall and soot, in form of letters ; her head, and voice, and spleen, kept their primitive form, and that which before was a cover of skin, did still continue so. In which guise she marched on towards the Moderns, undistinguishable in shape and dress from the divine B-ntl-y, W-tt-n's dearest friend. 'Brave W-tt-n,' said the goddess, 'why do our troops stand idle here, to spend their present vigour, and opportunity of this day ? Away, let us haste to the generals, and advise to give the onset immediately.' Having spoke thus, she took the ugliest of her monsters, full glutted from her spleen, and flung it invisibly into his mouth, which, flying straight up into his head, squeezed out his eye-balls, gave him a distorted look, and half overturned his brain. Then she privately ordered two of her beloved children, Dullness and Ill-Manners, closely to attend his person in all encounters. Having thus accoutred him, she vanished in a mist, and the hero perceived it was the goddess his mother.

The destined hour of fate being now arrived, the fight began ; whereof, before I dare adventure to make a particular description, I must, after the example of other authors, petition for a hundred tongues, and mouths, and hands, and pens, which would all be too little to perform so immense a work. Say, goddess, that presidest over History, who it was that first advanced in the field of battle ! Paracelsus, at the head of his dragoons, observing Galen in the adverse wing, darted his javelin with a mighty force, which the brave Ancient received upon his shield, the point breaking in the second fold. . .

. . . . *Hic pauca*
. . . . *desunt.*
. . . .

They bore the wounded aga on their shields to his chariot

. . . .
Desunt . . . .
nonnula . . . .

. . . .

Then Aristotle, observing Bacon advance with a furious mien, drew his bow to the head, and let fly his arrow, which missed the valiant Modern, and went hizzing over his head. But Descartes it hit ; the steel point quickly found a defect in his head-peace ; it pierced the leather and the pasteboard, and went in at his right eye. The torture of the pain whirled the valiant bowman round, till death, like a star of superior influence, drew him into his own vortex.

. . . .

Ingens hiatus . . . .

hic in MS. . . . .

. . . .

. . . . when Homer appeared at the head of the cavalry, mounted on a furious horse, with difficulty managed by the rider himself, but which no other mortal durst approach : he rode among the enemy's rank's, and bore down all before him. Say, goddess, whom he slew first and whom he slew last ! First, Gondibert advanced against him, clad in heavy armour, and mounted on a staid, sober gelding, not so famed for his speed as his docility in kneeling, whenever his rider would mount or alight. He had made a vow to Pallas that he would never leave the field till he had spoiled Homer of his armour : Madman, who had never once seen the wearer, nor understood his strength ! Him Homer overthrew, horse and man, to the ground, there to be trampled and choked in the dirt. Then, with a long spear, he slew Denham, a stout modern, who from his father's side derived his lineage from Apollo, but his mother was of mortal race. He fell, and bit the earth. The celestial part Apollo took, and made it a star ; but the terrestrial lay wallowing upon the ground. Then Homer slew W-sl-y, with a kick of his horse's heel ; he took Perrault by mighty force out of his saddle, then hurled him at Fontenelle, with the same blow dashing out both their brains.

On the left wing of the horse, Virgil appeared, in shining armour, completely fitted to his body : He was mounted on a dapple-gray steed, the slowness of whose pace was an effect of the highest mettle and vigour. He cast his eye on the adverse wing, with a desire to find an object worthy of his

valour, when, behold, upon a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size, appeared a foe, issuing from among the thickest of the enemy'e squadrons; but his speed was less than his noise; for his horse, old and lean, spent the dregs of his strength in a high trot, which, though it made slow advances, yet caused a loud clashing of his armour, terrible to hear. The two cavaliers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and, lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within, which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden. The brave Ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together, for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in a lobster, or like a mouse under a canopy of state, or like a shrivelled beau, from within the penthouse of a modern periwig; and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote. Dryden, in a long harangue, soothed up the good Ancient, called him father, and, by a large deduction of genealogies, made it plainly appear that they were nearly related. Then he humbly proposed an exchange of armour, as a lasting mark of hospitality between them. Virgil consented (for the goddess Diffidence came unseen, and cost a mist before his eyes), though his was of gold, and cost a hundred beeves, the other's but of rusty iron. However, this glittering armour became the Modern yet worse than his own. Then they agreed to exchange horses; but when it came to the trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount. . . . .

. . . .

. . . . *Alter hiatus*

. . . . *in MS.*

. . . .

Lucan appeared upon a fiery horse of admirable shape, but headstrog, bearing the rider where he list over the field; he made a mighty slaughter among the enemy's horse; which destruction to stop, Bl-ckm-re, a famous Modern (but one of the mercenaries), strenuously opposed himself, and darted a javelin with a strong hand, which, falling short of its mark, struck deep in the earth. Then Lucan threw a lance; but Æsculapius came unseen, and turned off the point. 'Brave

Modern,' said Lucan, 'I perceive some god protects you, for never did my arm so deceive me before ; but what mortal can contend with a god ? Therefore, let us fight no longer, but present gifts to each other.' Lucan then bestowed the Modern a pair of spurs, and Bl-ckm-re gave Lucan a bridle. . .

. . . .
Pauca de- . . . .
sunt. . . . . . .

Creech : but the goddess Dulness took a cloud, formed into the shape of Horace, armed and mounted, and placed in a flying posture before him. Glad was the cavalier to begin a combat with a flying foe, and pursued the image, threatening loud, till at last it led him to the peaceful bower of his father, Ogleby, by whom he was disarmed, and assigned to his repose.

Then Pindar slew—, and—, and Oldham, and—, and Afra the Amazon, light of foot ; never advancing in a direct line, but weeling with incredible agility and force, he made a terrible slaughter among the enemy's light horse. Him when Cowley observed, his generous heart burnt within him, and he advanced against the fierce Ancient, imitating his address, and pace, and career, as well as the vigour of his horse and his own skill would allow. When the two cavaliers had approached within the length of three javelins, first Cowley threw a lance, which missed Pindar, and, passing into the enemy's ranks, fell ineffectual to the ground. Then Pindar darted a javelin so large and weighty that scarce a dozen cavaliers, as cavaliers are in our degenerate days, could raise it from the ground ; yet he threw it with ease, and it went, by an unerring hand, singing through the air ; nor could the Modern have avoided present death, if he had not luckily opposed the shield that had been given him by Venus. And now both heroes drew their swords ; but the modern was so aghast and disordered, that he knew not where he was ; his shield dropped from his hands ; thrice he fled, and thrice he could not escape; at last he turned, and lifting up his hands in the posture of a suppliant : 'Godlike Pindar,' said he, 'spare my life, and possess my horse with these arms, besides the ransom which my friends will give when they hear I am alive, and your

prisoner.' 'Dog !' said Pindar, 'let your ransom stay with your friends ; but your carcass shall be left for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field.' With that he raised his sword, and, with a mightys troke, cleft the wretched Modern in twain, the sword pursuing the blow ; and one half lay panting on the ground, to be trod in pieces by the horses' feet, the other half was borne by the frighted steed through the field. This Venus took, washed it seven times in ambrosia, then struck it thrice with a sprig of amaranth ; upon which the leather grew round and soft, and the leaves turned into feathers, and being gilded before, continued gilded still ; so it became a dove, and she harnessed it to her chariot. .

. . . . . . *Hiatus valde deflendus in MS.*

. . . .

Day being far spent, and the numerous forces of the Moderns half inclining to a retreat, there issued forth from a squadron of their heavy-armed foot, a captain, whose name was B-ntl-y, in person the most deformed of all the Moderns ; tall, but without shape or comeliness ; large, but without strength or proportion. His armour was patched up of a thousand incoherent pieces, and the sound of it, as he marched, was loud and dry, like that made by the fall of a sheet of lead, which an Etesian wind blows suddenly down from the roof of some steeple. His helmet was of old rusty iron, but the vizor was brass, which tainted by his breath, corrupted into copperas, nor wanted gall from the same fountain ; so that, whenever provoked by anger or labour, an atramentous quality, of most malignant nature, was seen to distil from his lips. In his right hand he grasped a flail, and (that he might never be unprovided of an offensive weapon) a vessel full of ordure in his left. Thus completely armed, he advanced with a slow and heavy pace where the Modern chiefs were holding a consult upon the sum of things ; who, as he came onwards, laughed to behold his crooked leg and hump shoulder, which his boot and armour, vainly endeavouring to hide, were forced to comply with and expose. The generals made use of him for his talent of railing, which, kept within government, proved frequently of great

service to their cause, but, at other times, did more mischief than good ; for at the least touch of offence, and often without any at all, he would, like a wounded elephant, convert it against his leaders. Such, at this juncture, was the disposition of B ntl-y ; grieved to see the enemy prevail, and dissatisfied with everybody's conduct but his own. He humbly gave the Modern generals to understand, that he conceived, with great submission, they were all a pack of rogues, and fools, and sons of whores, and d—d cowards, and confounded loggerheads, and illiterate whelps, and nonsensical scoundrels; that if himself had been constituted general, those presumptuous dogs, the Ancients, would, long before this, have been beaten out of the field. 'You,' said he, 'sit here idle ; but when I, or any other valiant Modern, kill an enemy, you are sure to seize the spoil. But I will not march one foot against the foe till you all swear to me, that whomever I take or kill, his arms I shall quietly possess.' B—ntl—y having spoken thus, Scaliger, bestowing him a sour look : 'Miscreant prater !' said he, 'eloquent only in thine own eyes, thou railest without wit, or truth, or discretion. The malignity of thy temper perverteth nature, they learning makes thee more barbarous, thy study of humanity more inhuman ; thy coverse amongst poets, more grovelling, miry, and dull. All arts of civilizing others render thee rude and untractable ; courts have taught thee ill manners, and polite conversation has finished thee a pedant. Besides, a greater coward burdeneth not the army. But never despond ; I pass my word, whatever spoil thou takest shall certainly be thy own, though, I hope, that vile carcass will first become a prey to kites and worms.'

B-ntl-y durst not reply, but, half choked with spleen and rage, withdrew, in full resolution of performing some great achievement. With him, for his aid and companion, he took his beloved W-tt-n ; resolving, by policy or surprise, to attempt some neglected quarter of the Ancients' army. They begain their march over carcasses of their slaughtered friends ; then to the right of their own forces, then wheeled northward, till they came to Aldrovandus's tomb, which they passed on the side of the declining sun. And now they arrived, with fear, towards the enemy's out-guards ; looking about, if haply

they might spy the quarters of the wounded, or some straggling sleepers, unarmed, and remote from the rest. As when two mongrel curs, whom native greediness and domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds of some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow ; meanwhile, the conscious moon, now in her zenith, on their guilty heads darts perpendicular rays ; nor dare they bark, though much provoked at her refulgent visage, whether seen it puddle by reflection, or in sphere direct ; but one surveys the region round, while t'other scouts the plain, if haply to discover, at distance from the flock, some carcass half devoured, the refuse of gorged wolves, or ominous ravens. So marched this lovely, loving pair of friends, nor with less fear and circumspection ; when, at distance, they might perceive two shining suits of armour hanging upon on oak, and the owners not far off in a profound sleep. The two friends drew lots, and the pursuing of this adventure fell to B-ntl-y ; on he went, and in his van Confusion and Amaze, while Horror and Affright brought up the rear. As he came near, behold two heroes of the Ancients' army, Phalaris and Æsop, lay fast asleep : B—ntl—y would fain have dispatched them both, and, stealing close, aimed his flail at Phalaris's breast. But then the goddess Affright interposing, caught the Modern in her icy arms, and dragged him from the danger she foresaw ; for both the dormant heroes happened to turn at the same instant, though soundly sleeping, and busy in a dream. For Phalaris was just that minute dreaming how a most vile poetaster had lampooned him, and how he had got him roaring in his bull. And Æsop dreamed that, as he and the Ancient chiefs were lying on the ground, a wild ass broke loose, ran about, trampling and kicking, and dunging in their faces. B-ntl-y, leaving the two heroes asleep, seized on both their armours, and withdrew in quest of his darling W-tt-n.

He, in the meantime, had wandered long in search of some enterprize, till at length he arrived at a small rivulet, that issued from a fountain hard by, called, in the language of mortal men, Helicon. Here he stopped, and, parched with thirst, resolved to allay it in this limipid stream. Thrice with profane hands he essayed to raise the water to his lips, and

thrice it slipped all through his fingers. Then he stooped prone on his breast, but, ere his mouth had kissed the liquid crystal, Apollo came, and in the channel held his shield betwixt the Modern and the fountain, so that he drew up nothing but mud. For, although no fountain on earth can compare with the clearness of Helicon, yet there lies at bottom a thick sediment of slime and mud ; for so Apollo begged of Jupiter, as a punishment to those who durst attempt to taste it with unhallowed lips, and for a lesson to all not to draw too deep or far from the spring.

At the fountain-head W-tt-n discerned two heroes ; the one he could not distinguish, but the other was soon known for Temple, general of the allies to the Ancients. His back was turned, and he was employed in drinking large draughts in his helmet from the fountain, where he had withdrawn himself to rest from the toils of the war. W-tt-n, observing him, with quaking knees, and trembling hands, spoke thus to himself : 'O that I could kill this destroyer of our army, what renown should I purchase among the chiefs ! But to issue out against him, man for man, shield against shield, and lance against lance, what Modern of us dare ? For he fights like a god, and Pallas or Apollo are ever at his elbow. But, O mother ! if what Fame reports be true, that I am the son of so great a goddess, grant me to hit Temple with this lance, that the stroke may send him to hell, and that I may return in safety and triumph, laden with his spoils.' The first part of his prayer, the gods granted at the inter-cession of his mother and of Momus ; by the rest by a perverse wind sent from Fate was scattered in the air. Then W-tt-n grasped his lance, and, brandishing it thrice over his head, darted it with all his might, the goddess, his mother, at the same time, adding strength to his arm. Away the lance went hissing, and reached even to the belt of the averted Ancient, upon which lightly grazing, it fell to the ground. Temple neither felt the weapon touch him, nor heard it fall ; and W-tt-n might have escaped to his army, with the honour of having remitted his lance against so great a leader, unrevenged ; but Apollo, enraged that a javelin, flung by the assistance of so foul a goddess, should pollute his fountain, put on the shape of——, and softly came to young Boyle, who then accompanied

Temple. He pointed first to the lance, then to the distant Modern that flung it, and commanded the young hero to take immediate revenge. Boyle, clad in a suit of armour, which had been given him by all the gods, immediately advanced against the trembling foe, who now fled before him. As a young lion in the Libyan plains or Araby desert, sent by his aged sire to hunt for prey, or health, or exercise, he scours along, wishing to meet some tiger from the mountains, or a furious boar ; if chance, a wild ass, with brayings importune, affronts his ear, the generous beast, though loathing to distain his claws with blood so vile, yet, much provoked at the offensive noise which Echo, foolish nymph, like her ill-judging sex, repeats much louder, and with more delight than Philomela's song, he vindicates the honour of the forest, and hunts the noisy long-eared animal. So W-tt-n fled, so Boyle pursued. But W-tt-n, heavy armed and slow of foot, began to slack his course, when his lover. B-ntl-y, appeared returning laden with the spoils of the two sleeping Ancients. Boyle observed him well, and soon discovering the helmet and shield of Phalaris, his friend, both which he had lately with his own hands new polished and gilded, Rage sparkled in his eyes, and, leaving his pursuit after W-tt-n, he furiously rushed on against this new approacher. Fain would he be revenged on both ; but both now fled different ways ; and, as a woman in a little house that gets a painful livelihood by spinning, if chance her geese be scattered o'er the common, she courses round the plain from side to side, compelling here and there the stragglers to the flock ; they cackle loud, and flutter o'er the champaign So Boyle pursued, so fled this pair of friends : finding at length their flight was vain, they bravely joined, and drew themselves in phalanx. First B-ntl-y threw a spear with all his force, hoping to pierce the enemy's breast : but Pallas came unseen, and in the air took off the point, and clapped on one of lead which, after a dead bang against the enemy's shield, fell blunted to the ground. Then Boyle, observing well his time, took a lance of wondrous length and sharpness ; and as this pair of friends compacted stood close side to side, he wheeled him to the right, and, with unusual force, darted the weapon. B-ntl-y saw his fate approach, and flanking down his arms close to his ribs, hoping to save his body, in went the point,

passing through arm and side, nor stopped or spent its force, till it had also pierced the valiant W-tt-n, who going to sustain his dying friend, shared his fate. As when a skilful cook has trussed a brace of woodcocks, he, with iron skewer, pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs ; so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths, so closely joined that Charon would mistake them both for one, and waft them over Styx for half his fare. Farewell, beloved loving pair ! Few equals have you left behind : and happy and immortal shall you be, if all my wit and eloquence can make you.

And, now . . . . . .

. . . .

. . . .

. , . *Desunt cœtera.*

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JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

LIFE AND WORKS

Introduction : Richard Brinsley Sheridan, author, orator and parliamentarian, who along with the great Edmund Burke was responsible for the impeachment of Warren Hastings, first British Governor-General of India, tells an interesting but highly significant story of the school-days of Jonathan Swift. A horse was on the way to the knackers—tradesmen who bought and slaughtered useless animals of that name. For the sheer glory of riding his own horse through Kilkenny, at the Grammar School of which Swift was a student, Swift gave away all the money he had—one and six pence, all told—for possessing the animal. The horse promptly fell down dead. The anecdote is typical of all the future disappointments of Jonathan Swift. We have another in a similar vein from Swift himself: he speaks of a big fish he almost landed from the Nore. The water—creature appeared above the surface only to plunge back again to the loss and sore disappointment of the boy who had already congratulated himself on the success that never materialised.

Tragedy was writ large across the entire life of Jonathan Swift. William J. Long has a brilliant paragraph on this most staring fact about Swift's career on the face of our earth. "In each of Marlowe's tragedies," he says, "we have the picture of a man dominated by a single passion, the lust of power for its own sake. In each we see that a powerful man without self-control is like a dangerous instrument in the hands of a child ; and the tragedy ends in the destruction of the man by the ungoverned power which he possesses. The life of Swift is just such a living tragedy. He had the power of gaining wealth, like the haro of the *Jew of Malta* ; yet he used it scornfully, and in sad irony left what remained to him of a large property to found a hospital for lunatics. By hard work he won enormous literary power, and used it to satirize our common humanity. He wrested political power

from the hands of the Tories, and used it to insult the very men who had helped him, aad who held his fate in their hands. By his dominant personality he exercised a curious power over women, and used it brutally to make them feel their inferiority. Being loved supremely by two good women, he brought sorrow and death to both, and endless misery to himself. So his power brought always tragedy in its wake. It is only when we remember his life of struggle and disappointment and bitterness that we can appreciate the personal quality in his satire, and perhaps find some sympathy for this *greatest genius of all the Augustan writers.*"

Life : Jonathan Swift, "one of the most absorbing and enigmatic personalities in literature," was born in Dublin, Ireland, of English parents, on November 30, 1667. His father died before he was born. Swift and his mother were left dependent on Godwin Swift, a rich uncle of the lad. Through the generosity of this uncle Jonathan was educated at Kilkenny Grammar School and then at Trinity College in Dublin, Despite conflict with the college authorities and no very serious turn of mind, he took his degree in 1686. Delany, a famous tutor of Trinity, says authoritatively that his degree was discreditable. "Swift," he states emphatically, "is the only man I ever knew who ever fully recovered the disgrace of taking a degree as he took his." We are further told that the shock of the disgrace was a stimulus to Swift. He became earnest in the matter of studies, and 'he had often been heard to say that from the time of taking his degree he studied at least eight hours a day, one with another, for seven years.'

As Swift was proud and sensitive, he must have felt acutely his status of poor relation during his School and Collegiate education. He often abused his uncle who had, not parsimoniously, supported him at Kilkenny and Trinity. The maligned relative died, having lost most of his wealth, in 1688, and Swift was left to rely on his own efforts and exertions. About 1689 he became a household secretary to Sir William Temple, a statesman and an excellent diplomatist, and an old friend of the Swift family. Temple was at the time living in retirement at his country seat of Moor Park near London. Swift's first employment at Moor Park was very temporary.

On the expiry of one half of one year he left Temple and took up, through Temple's recommendation of course, the Parish of Kilroot, near Belfast in Ireland, and stayed there, as he says, for two years. While at Kilroot Swift had his love affair with Miss Waring, an heiress, known to Swift's readers as "Varina." To her he "proposed by letter in 1696, a definite answer to which was left in abeyance by the lady. He, however, corresponded with her till 1700, when a final letter of Swift's, by no means to his credit, ended the matter between them."

Swift's subservient position in the household of Sir William Temple sometimes galled his proud spirit. The youngman was supersensitive by nature and in spite of Temple's consideration for him thought he was "treated as a schoolboy." But much as Swift had grumbled at his position, he liked secretarial work for his patron in England rather than "dying like a rat" in Ireland. He, therefore, returned to Temple in 1696, and stayed with him till his (Temple's) death in 1699.

Thus Swift spent about ten of the best years of his life in the pretty Moor Park, Surrey, reading aloud to his patron, writing at dicatation, keeping accounts and cursing his fate. Notwithstanding Swift's growing bitterness, the period stood him in excellent stead. It was during these years that he wrote *The Battle of the Books*, a contribution to the controversy which Temple was conducting with Bentley, the great scholar, regarding the comparative merit of ancient and modern writers. Here too he had ample opportunity to enrich his mind by miscellaneous reading, browsing on books in the splendid library of Sir William Temple. "During this time he acted as tutor to Esther Johnson, a humble dependent of Temple's, a child when Swift first met her, who grew up to be a beautiful woman, destined as 'Stalla' to play a big part in Swift's emotional life." About this time also he commenced composition of *A Tale of a Tub*, a satire on the divisions of Christianity. Through Temple's help, too, Swift entered the church ; and after his patron's passing away he returned to Ireland in the position of Chaplain to Lord Berkeley, who gave him the living of Laracor near Dublin. It was at Laracor that he completed *A Tale of a Tub*.

For reasons best known to their author, the publication of

The Battle of the Books and *A Tale of a Tub* was withheld till 1704, when their appearance from the press immediately gave him a high reputation. And justifiably, for "they are among his greatest works, entertaining in their amazing fertility of wit, profound and penetrating in their ideas and exhibiting the full maturity and perfection of his prose style."

Swift's Political Career : Swift returned to England with Lord Berkeley in 1701. Here and this time he was drawn in the midst of a political crisis. This is known as the great period of Swift's life, the time of his political power and influence. While William III was the reigning monarch England was torn between two political parties. The Whigs or the Liberals sided with the king in his foreign policy of resistance to Louis XIV of France. The Tories or the Conservatives opposed him with regard to this policy. The bitter party struggle was continued in the reign of Queen Anne. Swift threw all his energies into the care of the Whigs, and wrote for them his pamphlet *On the Dissensions in Athens and Rome*. This seems strange in view of the fact that, as a churchman, his sympathises lay on the whole with the Tories. The truth of the matter is that Swift was frequently in London to promote his chances for offices in the church as they fell vacant. Since neither the Tories nor the Whigs helped realise his hopes for "First Fruits," he cast politics aside for the time being, and in disgust went back to Ireland in 1709.

In 1710, however, he joined the Tories, who were just coming into power. The Tory ministers were determined to stop the war with France. In defence of this policy Swift produced one of his most powerful political pamphlets, *The Conduct of the Allies*, on November 27, 1711. Within a few days a second edition was brought out and sold out in a few hours ; 11,000 copies were in circulation by the end of January. The Tories applauded him. The Whigs were afraid of his pen. Swift was at the zenith of his power and glory. His life during these years when, according to Dr. Johnson, he was "predominating over his companions with very high ascendancy, and probably would bear none over whom he could not predominate," is reflected in his *Journal to Stella*, a daily account of his doings which he wrote for his friend, the beautiful Esther Johnson of

the Moor Park acquaitance. Here we find Swift playing with gusto the part in which he most delighted, that of an active, successful and powerful man of affairs. The rulers of the country paid him homage. Lords, statesmen, even ladies were compelled to sue for his good opinion and to tender an unqualified apology for every fancied slight to his egoism : an unbearable arrogance mounted to his head. A relevant record in his *Journal to Stella* runs :—

"Mr. Secretary told me the Duck of Buckingham had been talking much about me and desired my acquaintance. I answered it could not be, for he had not yet made sufficient advances ; then Shrewsbury said he thought the Duck was not used to make advances. I said I could not help that, for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a Duke than any other man."

Here is what he wrote to the Duchess of Queensberry:—

"I am glad you know your duty ; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspire to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality the greater were their advances."

In 1713, as the reward for his support of the Tory government, he was appointed Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. This was a promotion little to his liking. Swift expected and most probably had been promised a bishopric in England. What he actually got offended his proud spirit. But the author of the *Tale of a Tub*, that merciless satire on religion inclusive of the Anglican Church, could not be made a bishop in England. The Tory ministry fell in 1714, and Swift could not but accept the appointment bitterly. Once more he had to thank himself for the accursed fate he had brought upon himself.

With his return to the country he detested most begins the last act in the tragedy of Swift's life. His invincible energy and unconquerable activity found vent in taking up cudgels on behalf of the Irish, or rather the Englishmen resident in Ireland, against the thoughtless tyranny of the government. In the

process he put out *The Drapier's Letters* as a devastating protest against debasing the Irish coinage. The *Letters* were published anonymously. When the actual authorship was revealed, "Swift became the idol of the poor in Ireland, and so greatly did they believe in him that a crowd, having assembled to witness an eclipse, dispersed immediately when some wag said that it had been postponed by order of the Dean." *Culliver's Travels* was pnblished in 1726. The book was a roaring success. The glorious hour, like everything else in his life, seemed to turn only to disappointment. Swift's beloved "Stella" died in 1728 and left him desolate. A disease from which he had suffered on occasions gained rapidly upon him. He grew deaf and insane. After years of gloom and agony, death came and released him on October 19, 1745. Swift lies buried with "Stella" in his own cathedral of St. Patrick's in Dublin.

Writings of Jonathan Swift

So great is the praise bestowed upon Swift as a writer of prose that few of his readers know that he has written some poetry too. Of course as a poet he does not rank high. The reason is not far to find. The imaginative idealism which is so essential to what is usually called the poetic view of life is not there in this writer. All the same he has produced to his credit as such a good deal of witty and humorous verse on realistic subjects. Fairly early in life and to improve his prospects he wrote a pindaric ode to King William. The poem is by no means bad. One was 'writ to a young lady in Ireland, called *The Ramble*'. There was another ode, entitled *The Poet*. Among Swift's most charming poetic pieces, however, are his birthday poems for Stella and his amusing *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift*. But the best thing that can be said about the Dean's poetical works is that they reveal the vigorous, forceful personality of their auther : they are fluent and direct and simple. And that is all. Otherwise they are anything but great poetry.

We are, however, concerned primarily with his prose-writing. Among these, the first notable work is *The Battle of the Books*. Of this piece of satirical composition plenty will have to be said in the following pages. Published along with *The Battle of the Books* in 1704 in London is *A Tale of a Tub*, a satire

on the various churches of the day. Swift himself as well as some other judges regarded the *Tale* as his greatest work. Its main sections present the allegory of the three brothers, Peter, Martin, and Jack, who respectively stand for the Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Calvainistic Churches. The narrative is a grim exposure of the alleged weaknesses of these three principal forms of Christian religious belief. The Anglieon Church too comes in for its share of criticism. In the end science and philosophy even stand satirized. The complexity and comprechensiveness of its contants and the exhilarating abundance of its wit go to make *A Tale of a Tub* are markable contribution to the literature of the world. The great originality and intellectual power of the *Tale* are uncontestable. It is the best exhibition of Swift's genius as a satirist.

Swift's political pamphlets constitute a class apart of his prose compositions. They are powerful pieces. Two of them have been mentioned already—*On the Dissensions in Athens and Rome* written for the Whigs and *The Conduct of the Allies* produced for the benefit of the Tory Party. *The Drapier's Letters* deserve inclusion in this very class. They are "a model of political harangue and of popular argument which roused an within King, English public and did much benefit to Ireland by preventing the politicians' plan of debasing the Irish coinage". These writings together with some others of the type alone will suffice to put Swift on a high pedestal in the domain of English prose. All the distinct and distinctive qualities of the author are conspicuously present in his political pieces. Simplicity, smashing vigour, sincerity and staire are here in plenty. There is force in them. The brilliance of wit sparkless on every page. That is why these writings created a stir and stamped an impression. As a result Swift gained enormous popularity. All people and parties were dying to have him on their side. Lords, statesmen, even those of the fair sex waited in attendance upon him. The Whigs were afraid of the lash of his satire. The Tories were most anxious not to lose his support.

The Journal to Stella is a sort of diary, written for the most part in the years 1710—1713, for the benefit of Swift's beloved Esther Johnson. It is a diary minus the drabness of a diary.

Its importance is two-fold. In the first place, the *Journal* is an excellent commentary on contemporary characters and political occurrences, and the commentator happens to be one of the most original and powerful men of the time. Secondly, the *Journal* reveals, beneath the stern exterior and harsh violence of its author, a view of curious tenderness and whimsicality. "Stella" was the only ray of sunlight in the dark and gloomy world of Swift. The reader is bound to stand silent and wonder-struck as he goes through Swift's words of tenderness and affection for the charming woman who loved him. "The *Journal* is written in a kind of sentimental shorthand, the writer using queer abbreviations for his caressing endearments :

"And now let us come and see what this saucy dear letter of M.D. (my dear) says. Come out letter, come out from between the sheets ; here it is underneath and it will not come out. Come out again, I say......... Here it is......... Hold up your head then like a good letter......... Farewell M.D.M.D.M.D."

But the most popular book of Jonathan Swift is *Gulliver's Travels*. It was written in 1726-27. The book is in four volumes, and records the supposed four voyages of one Lemuel Gulliver and his adventurous experiences in four astounding countries. The first volume is concerned with his voyage and shipwreck in Lilliput. The Lilliputians are dwarfs, about as tall as the average human thumb. Their monarch is taller by a nail-breadth. Swift depicts, in the petty acts and motives of these creatures, the littleness of humanity. The statesmen of the island secure place and promotion by cutting monkey-capers on the tight rope in front of their sovereign. There are two big parties—the Littleendians and the Bigendians. These parties plunge their country into ferocious civil war over the momentous question of whether an egg (of a Lilliputian hen) should be broken on its big or on its little end. Here are but satires on the politics of the author's own time and clime. This volume is the most interesting of Swift's satires. The style is simple and convincing. The surprising situations and adventures are simply absorbing.

The second voyage is the subject matter of Volume II of *Gulliver's Travels*. It takes Gulliver to and abandons him in Brob-

dingang. The inhabitants of this astonishing land are giants. Everything is done here on a very large scale. The pettiness of human-kindness seems all the more loathsome in comparison with the greatness of these superior beings. When Gulliver narrates to them the mode of life of his own people their, affairs, wars, ambitions and conquests, the Brobdingnagians are rendered dumb with wonder that such fatal poison could exist in such little vermin as men of this world of ours.

Gulliver's findings and experiences in Laputa form the theme of the third volume of *Gulliver's Travels*. The volume is a staire upon science and philosophy, in fact upon all the scientists and philosophers. Laputa is a flying island, held up in air by means of a magnet. Lagado is the name of the famous academy of the place. The philosopher who worked eight long years at the academy with the object of extracting sunshine from cucumbers and the experiment of letting loose a herd of swine in a field to cultivate it best—the snouts acting as so many plough-shares and the swine-dung acting as substantial fertilizer —are typical of Swift's satiric treatment of all scientific pursuits and experiments. We also read of a ghastly race of men who are doomed to live upon earth after they have lost all hope and desire for life. The name chosen for them is the Struldbrugs. In the life of the Struldbrugs Swift is but painting his own last terrible days when he was nothing short of a burden to himself and his friends.

In the *fourth* voyage Swift carries out the merciless satire upon men and their ways—their weaknesses and wickednesses, the darkening and dreadful veil of habit and custom—to its logical conclusion. The land is the land of the Houyhnhnms (pronounced 'whinnims'). They are only intelligent horses ruling the country. They are far superior to the Yahoos, a filthy and degraded race closely resembling mankind. In this volume, the writer's object is nothing but a vast sombre indictment of the human race. The picture is terrible, but that is what Swift thought of the human species. "It seems paradoxical," says a critic, "that so misanthropic a genius should have produced one of the world's most enchanting books for children." But it is only the first two volumes which after expurgation and adaptation appeal both to the child and the grownup. And

no wonder. Far after expurgation and adaptation what is left is bright and gay, full of the charm and innocent adventures of the imaginary voyages. What is in evidence then is playfulness of fancy, a light gracefulness of touch, and imitable simplicity of treatment. The last two volumes are darkened by the insanity of Swift's last days. The delightful fantasy yields place to frightening bitterness. The book as a whole and without alterations is meant neither for babes nor for adults. Truth, they say is sometimes stranger than fiction. The truth in this case is that boys and girls as well as their counterparts at the advanced stage of human life have cherished Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* like nothing. The superior attractiveness of the book is a fact of literary history. On that account alone it is one of the immortals in the literature not only of England but of the entire globe. All credit and thanks to Jonathan Swift for having produced it. Seen at its worst even, the book has its beauty as well as utility. The thorns are prickly and piercing. But they enclose and encircle a basketful of roses. Even so, the thorn is a necessity, an essentiality. "It is not without purpose," remarks a celebrated Urdu poet, "that the thorn keeps company of the flower : by sheer contrast it adds charm and lustre to its brilliant neighbour-plus-companion." And therein lies the greatness and the glory of Jonathan Swift : he has made us intensely aware of the thorns of life. Mustard-seeds are bitter and repulsive. But when ground and made into paste they are used as condiment or for poultice or as plaster : they then heal up physical human ailments. Even a grain of mustard seed taken orally improves the stomach and purifies the blood. Swift is the greatest dealer-out of the metaphorical mustard.

Swift's Place in Literature

Jonathan Swift is a very great name in English literature. Even those readers who take an easy, pleasant and superficial view of litrature are bound to remember the names of the 'firsts' in the different compartments of literary composition. Swift stands at the top in one paticluar class or division of English literature : he is the greatest prose-writer that England has ever produced.

Jonathan Swift and Joseph Addison are two contemporaries who are mentioned in the same breath as writers of English prose. Yet they are studies in sharp contrast. Addison is a past master in the pleasant art of living with one's fellow-men. He, therefore, owes his large place in the history of English literature to his perfect expression of that art. But he is certainly less powerful and original than his great contemporary. He himself made no bones of admitting that Swift was the greatest genius of the age. In fact that compliment has been paid ungrudingly by many to the author of *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. The greatest and most original genius of the eighteenth century England. The topmost prose-writer of England so far. Swift enjoys that reputation and that rank.

One of the truisms of human experience is that no great man goes without detractors. Swift is no exception. "Swift" say Horace Walpole," was a wild beast who worried and baited all mankind almost, because his intolerable arrogance, vanity, pride end ambition were disappointed." On the other extreme is the handsome tribute paid to him by that unhandsome man, Thomas Carlyle, the sage of Chelsea. "By far the greatest man of that time," remarks this dyspeptic of English letters. "I think, was Jonathan Swift.........He saw himself in a world of confusion and falsehood, no eyes were clearer to see it than his."

Both the varying judgments—the first of the eighteenth century and the second of the age of Queen Victoria——err perhaps on the side of exaggeration. "Walpole's coolly clever and languidly brilliant gifts, his easy-going nature and dilletante cast of mind, were so remote from Swift's powers in quality and character. as to make appreciation a mental impossiblity. Carlyle's intense earnestness and his eye for forceful personality, certainly gave him far greater insight into Swift's character and genius, but made him unduly tolerant of those faults and weaknesses, that assuredly must be considered if we wish to deal fairly with the man in relation to his age." All the same the mere fact that Swift has won high praise from such a giant of English prose as Carlyle who is puritansically chary of scattering compliments is by itself and in itself a fairly convincing proof of pure indisputable greatness.

A remarkable thing about Swift as a writer is that his compositions were occaional and developed out of the circumstances of his life. That implies that he was far from being a professional writer. It is significant in this connection that his works were, with one or two exceptions, *anonymous* publications. Pre-eminently and pre-dominantly he was a man of affairs. He became a man of literature because he felt that affairs could be directed through literature. We have, therefore, to look upon his writings as but an expression of energy utilised for practical ends. In fact his activity was preternatural. This writer lived hard. "There is no such thing," he wrote to a friend once, "as a fine old gentleman, if the man had a mind or body worth a farthing they would have worn him out long ago."

On this account, too, Swift's place in the history of literature is very high. His writings are first-rate and have made him famous. His contribution to English prose style is original and considerable. His literary works possess an outstanding quality. *The Battle of the Books*, his first important work is a masterpiece. *A Tale of Tub*, with its bitter reflections upon the spiritual history of man since the advent of Christianity, ranks among the immortals of the world's literature. His *Gulliver's Travels*, a sort of *Robinson Crusoe*, has contributed numcrous original and highly interesting figures to the literature of mankind as a whole. Above all his satire is his greatest and most imperishable literary creation.

One of the most absorbing and enigmatic personalities in literature, Jonathan Swift was, taken all in all "wonderful and inscrutable, a bundle of paradoxes, the object of universal curiosity, the repulsion of the many, the impassioned worship of the few." The eloquent quotation is from "A History of Eighteenth Century Literature" by Edmund Gosse. "Oh," excalims Hazlitt, that sensitive critic of the Romantic period, "when shall we have such another Rector of Laracor—*The Tale of a Tub* is one of the most masterly compositions in the language, whether for thought, wit or style." The most celebrated personality in the history of English prose, Swift has earned from the critical Dr. Johnson the enviable encomium : "......perhaps no writer can easily be found that has borrowed so little, or that in all his excellences and all his

defects has so well maintained his claim to be considered as original."

John Middleton Murry says in his *Swift a Critical Biography*, "He is big to the imagination as no contemporary figure, in the world of letters or affairs, is big. A kind of Promethean defiance is for ever revealing itself in his attitudes and the eagle plucks at his heart......" All the writing of Swift, comments Prof. Oliver Elton, "has an immeasurable stamp of will......" "He towers head and shoulders above all the comtemporaries both as a writer and a man ; his amazing energy continues to impart itself to any reader who admires him enough to criticize him, and is humble enough to do him homage ; he is a man for the unsentimental to love as he was loved by Arbuthnot and by Stella. And his writings retain their disturbing impact on the imagination." This is what Bonamy Dobree says about Swift in his *English Literature in the early Eighteenth Century*.

"Swift's great value as a writer," concludes Arthur Compton-Rickett, "lies in his challenge to an easy, complacent optimism and yet even here the man is greater than his work. He remains a tragic and sombre figure, reviling his age and crushed by it ; an Ajax defying the lightning and smitten with blindness. Yet we realise his underlying greatness of genius the more clearly as we place him beside other writers of the time—Pope, Addison, Steele—and see how they dwindle in importance. For the issues he touched upon and the imagination he brought to bear upon them, vastly transcended theirs. No finer thing has been said of his tragic life than was said by Thackaray : 'To think of him is like thinking of the ruin of a great Empire.'

Some idea of Swift's greatness may be found, perhaps, on consideration of the special quality of his satire.

Swift as a Satirist

What is satire ? asks the student of literature. And that is the first question that the reader of Swift's works addresses himself.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English defines *satire* as "a composition in verse or prose holding up vice or folly to

ridicule or lampooning individual(s), this branch of literature." A writing aimed at prevalent vices or follies is a satirical piece of writing.

Jonathan Swift is a satirical writer. It seems Providence had created him or sent him into the world of men for that and that purpose alone. From the very start of his career as an author to the very end thereof he was a satirist. The vest majority of his writings are satirical. Perhaps the *Joural to Stella* and a few poetical bits are the only exceptions. And his satire is of a peculiar, rather original nature. Both quantitatively and qualitatively, therefore, he is the greatest English satirist in prose. One can go a big step farther and hold that the world has not produced the like or equal of him as such.

Every great man—and one of literary fame is no exception—has one particular gift bestowed upon him by God. In reality he comes into this world to fill a gap which he and he alone can fill. Now none in his senses will question the greatness of Swift as a man of letters. And the one talent he was endowed with by the fairies or the destinies or the divinities—whichever you choose to pin your faith on—was the one of satire. Just before he was thirty he wrote *A Tale of a Tub*, with *The Battle of the Books*, as one of the two subordinate pieces. And just before he was sixty he published *Gulliver's Travels*. In "between these two he did enough raiding and mining and sharpshooting to make a dozen satirists, and he delivered some scattered fire afterwards. But these books remain his great assaults upon mankind. They are the first and last gospels of misanthrophy according to him."

The Battle of the Books is his first important work. It is a satire on the controversy that was then going on regarding the relative merits of Ancient and Modern writers. It is a mock-heroic account of the civil war that broke out among the books of the Royal Library. The academic dispute of ancient *versus* modern which excited and intrested so many of Swift's contemporaries seems to us of the present day foolish as well as futile. But the flashes of satiric fancy which illuminate the theme of the book remain and interest us enormously. And the composition is much more than worth reading for its amusing

apologue of the bee and the spider. The spider stands for the moderns : he claims superiority over the bee for his originality, for the secretes everything from his own nature while the bee is a plunderer of flowers. The bee represents the ancients. He admits his own wandering habits, retorts that the so-called originality of the spider results in only poison and cobwebs where as he himself, by gathering from whatever flowers he lights on, produces honey and wax, 'thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.' Taken as a whole *The Battle of the Books* is the happiest of all Swift's satires.

A Tale of a Tub is the greatest work of Jonathan Swift. It is a satire on the divisions of the Christian Faith. The Clergyman in Swift "attacked the papists and Presbyterians in the *Tale of a Tub* (1704). But he allowed himself to be persuaded by his mocking genius to trace the whole history of Christianity in an allegorical form, and he did it in a spirit of buffoonery which hardly spared even Anglicanism, and well calculated to disturb pious souls of every sect. The history of the three brothers Pater (Roman Catholicism), Martin (Anglican Protestantism), and Jack (Scottish Presbyterianism) who adapt the Bible-teaching to the needs of the day and the demands of their own temperament is encumbered, in this strange book, with a whole series of prefaces, introductions, and disgressions which Swift employed in order to parody erudite and controversial writers — the whole forming a rich arsenal in which all the sceptics of the eighteenth century found sharp-edged weapons." The Tale began as a fierce exposure of the alleged weaknesses of three principal churches of Christianity. It ended, however, in a satire upon all scienee and philosophy.

Swift's two greatest satires are his *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. In the latter book the satire grows more unbearable and ubiquitous. Under the cloak of fantastic stories the author satirized the politics of his time and country, the religious quarrels, the wars prompted and promoted by ambition, the experiments and adventures of science, and also the very nature of man and the entire human species. *Gulliver's Travels* was Swift's revenge upon his society and the government of his country, rather upon the whole of mankind. Loathing man-

kind by instinct, he might never the less have put up with it if he had been allowed to dominate over that portion of it which fell within his range. But he was denied that by his lack of rank and fortune as well as by want of tact. The result was that he came to hate mankind with an increasing rage which became a disease in his nature. So he made up his mind to hurt and insult it by an account of it in comic but bitter disguises. The satire assumes terrific proportions in the fourth volume : the play of the imagination is subjugated to the purpose of a vast sombre indictment of the entire human race. Intelligent horses are the rulers and they keep in subjection the filthy and degraded Yahoos, creatures closely resembling the human species. No more savage book was ever written.

The minor writing of Swift are equally replete with the satiric element. The truth about this great writer is that he was nothing if not a satirist. Satire was the deity he put on a high pedestal and he worshipped with the zest and gusto of a geniune votary. It was the mission of his life, the very breath of his nostrils, the marrow of his bones and the plasma of his blood, without doubt and without any fear of contradiction he may be styled the greatest satirist in English prose.

Misanthropy—the Origin of Swift's Satire

What does Swift's satire spring from ? Where does it grow ? What is its genesis ?

Well, the origin of Swift's satire was in his misanthropy. The word 'misanthropy' comes from the Greek *misanthropos*=*miseo* hate+*anthropos* man. Misanthropy, therefore, means hatred or contempt for mankind. A misanthrope is one who hates or despises mankind. Swift is a very good and very great example of misanthropy.

This misanthropy of Swift was overnice, overscrupulous in questions of propriety, honesty, etc. In consequence he was easily neuseated, squeamish, fastidious, hard to please or be satisfied. This fastidiousness, of Swift was apparently pathological. But it was undoubtedly instinctive and hence deep, constant, and incurable. He shrank from mankind in general. This shyness gave rise to fear of men-in-the-mass on the part of Swift. From

fear to hate was the next step. All the same he found himself obliged to live, move and have his being in the midst of men. Rather he felt perversely attracted towards mankind in some of its manifestations. The result was that he struck at it in order to remain unscathed himself. It was these strokes or shafts of his aimed and flung at mankind that go to constitute his satires. That is the reason why his satirical writings are said to have their genesis in his misanthropy. Swift's outlook on life is dark, gloomy, dismal. The sombre view of life was his by nature. In other words he was born with it.

What has been stated above is, however, only one half of the story, and may be the weaker half of it. The better, the stronger half of Swift's pessimism is that it was particularly fostered and reinforced by the circumsrances and happenings of his life on earth. Carl Van Doren has remarked that "Swift's grievances were hardly specific." One would join issue with the critic in regard to the statement. The truth lies the other way about. There was a varitable cropful of grievances that Swift harboured against the society and politics and government of his time and country. The crows he had to pluck with them were numerous and well-marked.

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It should be definitely and definitively born in mind by the student of Jonathan Swift that his writer is typical. No doubt the type of human beings he represents does not have a large membership. There are some in every country and in every age who belong to his category. These are the men who have special endowment in the brain or the hand or the heart, men who are highly talented and richly gifted. They are also furnished with more than their due share of pride. Moreover they happen to be very sensitive, rather supersensitive. They find, however, that they cannot accommodate themselves to the prevailing order of things round about them. In consequence they are candidates for failure. They believe that they should succeed and prosper by dint of their merits. Unfortunately for them they find that values that count in life are far different, at least those that do not pass with them. The prizes of life are carried away either by the devils or the duffers of their surroundings. Sensible observers who go about with their eyes and ears open must have surely come across such tragic failures in their national or social life.

Now, Jonathan Swift was this type. Admittedly the greatest genius of the eighteenth century England, the most elaborated prose-writer of the Augustan Age in English literature, he met failure after failure in the worldly sense. The master of circumstance ever stared him hard in the face. Even if on rare occasions Dame Fortune smiled on him, his own pride or intellectual power or sensitive nature stood in the way. Whereas Swift was an intellectual giant, he was also proud as Lucifer and sensitive as mimosa.

From the very beginning fates were against Swift. His posthumous birth has a stigma attached to it. He was born to his mother and poverty simultaneously. Within a year of his birth, the baby Jonathan Swift was amicably kidnapped. Presumably he was returened to his mother in Ireland after about three years. Long afterwards, Swift blamed the imprudent marriage of his parents for consequences which he had felt all his life. Naturally the singularities of his childhood was largely responsible for the smilarities of his character. During his school and collegiate career Swift was in the care of his uncle Godwin Swift. His mother chose to return to her home in England as she did not like to be herself also a burden on her brother-in-law. One can imagine the effect separation from his mother for a number of years must have had upon the boy's growth. "He gave me the education of a dog," said Swift about his uncle in after life. That means Godwin Swift was niggardly in spending money on the nephew who felt bitterly humiliated by his poverty.

After graduation the only position open to Swift was with a distant relative, Sir William Temple, who made him his private secretary at Moor Park in England. There is no reason at all to suppose with Macaulay that Swift was treated as a menial servant at Moor Park. Temple was fairly generous and took a kind and indulgent interest in his young ward. But Swift's supersensitive nature rebelled against the dependency of his position : he complained that he was "treated as a schoolboy." Here was another drop of the acid that entered the very soul of Swift.

In the great period of his life, the two political parties did precious little for Swift. The Whigs were not much interested

in religion. Swift, therefore, joined the Tories and supported the party with his powerful pen. As a reward he had looked and hoped for a bishopric in England. But the utmost that Queen Anne could agree to do for the author of *A Tale of a Tub* was his appointment as Dean of St. Patrick's cathedral in Dublin. Swift despised to live in Ireland but he had to swallow his pride and the bitter pill together.

Smaller men, he saw, were being preferred and promoted. He, the greatest genius of the land, was rotting uunoticed, uncared-for and unappreciated. The very thought must have been gall and vitriol to him. As if the foregoing were not sufficient, the story goes that as he came out of the church after his marriage with Esther Johnson it transpired that she and he bore to each other the relationship of half-sister-and-brother. Could destiny have dealt a severer blow to a mortal? "The unhappiest man in the world"—that is how he looked to an intimate observer at the moment. As for the other woman who was passionately fond of him—Vanessa," an intellectual and accomplished lady—, well, she died of grief and jealousy in 1723, the responsibility being that of the Dean himself. "Stella," his beloved, gave up the ghost in 1728. The last straw on the camel's back came in the shape of a brain disease fastening its terrible hold upon him.

Thus was Swift's congenital misanthropy confirmed and strengthened by all his experience. Tragedy was written across the whole of his life. In the circumstances he fortified himself in his situation with "a blunt metaphysics of hatred." He had personally seen and proved the repulsiveness and stupidity of the human race in which only "the knaves prospered and only the fools could be happy." "Like a burning moralist, like a freezing geometer, he wrote to demonstrate his hate and scorn and to prove that no other attitude was reasonable." So that is how Swift's satire originated in his misanthrophy, his pessimism, his sombre outlook on life.

Swift's Irony—main Instrument of his Satire

The chief weapon of Swift in his satirical writings is unveiled irony in attacking contemporary shortcomings. According to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary irony is "expression of one's meaning by language of opposite or different tendency,

especially stimulated adoption of another's point of view for purpose of ridicule ;......use of language that has inner meaning for a privileged audience and an outer meaning for the persons addressed or concerned, occasionally including speaker." Irony is very much similar to the method of a highwayman who stimulates friendship with the object of disarming a traveller and removing suspicion, but after he has crept into the innocent man's favour soundly belabours him and robs him of all his belongings.

Now Swift is a pastmaster of irony—in the words of Charles Wibley "the greatest that has even been born in these (*i.e.*, British) isles, great enough to teach a lesson to Voltaire himself, and to inspire the author of Jonathan Wild." Misanthropy and irony are linked in his writings. But he has nothing but the method of the highwayman. For the rest, he elevated irony to a high pedestal in English literature. Irony is a tool of controversy. It thrives when personal animosities are rite, when particular people identify themselves with particular causes or ideas. Since the Elizabethan Age was almost free from literary disputes, irony is conspicuously absent from Elizabethan literature. Swift's age was one of controversy, and therefore irony flourished in this time. This writer delivered irony from the sordid regions of personal wrangling : he rescued it from bitterness and loss of temper.

Swift's real aim of assailing a vice is always veiled under a superficial appearance of playfulness. The faculty of stimulated adoption of another's point of view Swift developed from the very start. It can be stated without exaggeration that almost every page he has written is the adoption of another's point of view, followed by a bitter onslaught on the same. But he begins with a gentle exercise of humour and the mood of lightness. The spirit and method of his staire is shown clearly in a little incident of his first days in London. A certain Mr. Partridge was in the habit of issuing an almanac containing predictions of events imminent in the year following. He made pots of money through this trick. Swift could not tolerate an impostor. Therefore he exposed Partridge in a set of predictions for the year 1708. One of these predictions was the death of Partridge himself, who, according to the prophecy, would

"Infallibly die upon the 29th of March, about eleven at night, of a raging fever." The predictions appeared under the name of Isaac Bickerstaff. On the 30th of March was published a letter over the signature of a revenue officer, giving an account of Partridge's last days and death. "An Elegy of Mr. Partridge appeared alongside. Partridge who suddenly lost all custom rushed to the press saying that he was not dead. Promptly appeared "A vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff," in which after rebuking Partridge for his impudence, Swift proved by astrological facts and logical demonstration that Partridge certainly died "within half an hour of the time foretold" and that the man in his place was an impostor trying to cheat the heirs out of their inheritance.

This ferocious joke suggests the true quality of Swift's satire and the ironic method he employs in these satires. If terminology could be borrowed from another branch of learning, Swift's method and spirit in his satirical writings is the method of homoeopathy. Homoeopathy, according to an authority on the subject, is a system of cure based on the fact that any substance which is capable of producing symptoms of a disease in the healthy body will remove those symptoms and cure the disease when met with in the sick. That exactly is irony. And Swift uses irony on the homoeopathic assumption above stated. Against any case of hypocrisy or injustice Swift sets up a remedy of exactly the same sort, only more atrocious, and defends his plan with such seriousness that the satire overwhelms the reader with a sense of monstrous falsity. The very same method, *viz*., irony, he employs in "Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity may be attended with some Inconveniences" and his "Modest Proposal" concerning the children of Ireland. A very interesting example is offered the reader by Swift in one of Collins's *Discourse of Free Thinking*.

He is trying to smash to smithereens the stock argument of free thinkers......... "If we do not see freely, we do not see at all. If we do not eat freely, we do not eat at all. And if we do not think freely, we do not think at all." He is in reality mimicking in a monk logical way the argument of Collins in favour of free-thinking. "How can a man think at all, if he does not think freely? A man who does not eat and drink freely, does not eat

and drink at all. Dry may not be denied the liberty of free-seeing as well as free thinking. Yet nobody pretends the first is unlawful, for a cat may look on a king ...."

Swift as an ironist is generelly misuderstood because of his savagery. It should be remembered that he never denounced the ignorant and misguided people. It was humbug and meanness that he attacked. Error arising from genuine ignorance was never ridiculed by him. We cannot agree with Johnson and Thackeray when they suggest that Swift was not quite honest. Swift was very honest and desparately sincere and used irony against what was false and despicable in the ranks of men.

Another thing remarkable about Swift in this connection is that he possessed piercing insight into human nature. He pursued an absurd conceit with remorseless logic to its utter destruction. He presents his irony in a business-like manner. He preserved utter gravity and seriousness, however ridiculous the situation. His irony is deadly and bitter though sincerity is not lacking. The last volume of *Gulliver's Travels* where Gulliver meets Yahoos is an instance. The ruling horses are tolerant, courtly, well-bred and self-constrained. Men are noisy, self-centred, vile and slovenly. Swift does not stress either point. He lets the situation give its own lesson.

But his ideas are not lofty ideas. He seems to have no hope for the world. He scorns the pettiness of his fellow-creatures. He is not a creative writer. He has undoubtedly, the keenness of vision to see clearly the contemptible in his fellow-men, but has little appreciation for what was good and great in them.

Further there is an emotional intensity in his irony. Swift's irony glows with consuming intensity of feeling. Words are like molten lead. There is vigour enough in this irony to drive home a point. Swift specializes in the negative emotions, the positive appears negative. The emotional intensity of Swift's irony is purely destructive. It is not a matter of faith. It is a matter of surprise and negation.

Swift's irony was aimed against all the common failings of humanity, especially the pretentious nature of man. Swift got mightily angry at the thought that a creature stuffed with

bowels and excrements could pretend to so much and also make so much of destruction among the living beings in the world.

In short all human institutions from the family to the state receive Swift's ironical attention. For effecting his satirical purpose the Dean uses this principal instrument of irony. In *The Battle of the Books* he uses irony where he describes Ignorance and Goddess of Criticism helping the moderns.

Purpose and Characteristics of Swift's Satire

"There are," says Swift in his essay on A Vindication of Mr. Gary, "two ends that men propose in writing satire, one of them less noble than the other, as regarding nothing further than personal malice; the other is a public spirit, prompting men of genius and virtue, to mend the world as far as they are able. And as both these ends are innocent, so the latter is highly commendable." There is no doubt, as Emile Legouis remarks, that Swift's "pleasure in ridicule was stronger than his desire to correct." He displays, like all moralists," the faults and vices of humanity, but he does not seem to have any hope of reforming them." Its harsh tone and cynical vigour notwithstanding, the satire of Swift belongs to the second of the types defined by him. It is definitely produced in a public spirit and not out of malice.

"In certain respects Swift resembles Defoe. There is direct vigour and matter-of-factness about his satire, and, like Defoe, he uses irony to drive home a point less wide in his range than Defoe, and more savage in his methods, he sounds profounder depths, and exhibits a more cosmic humour than his contemporary. The humor is often as bitter as gall, but its power and appositeness are beyond question. Tragedy is written across Swift's life. His intellectual audacity stood in his own pathway. There could be no preferment for the churchman who so mercilessly ridicules theology in *The Tale of a Tub*; no happiness for a lover so capricious and incalculable as he; no content for a man who, in an age when the emotional life was kept so sternly subjected, looked out upon life with such fierce and passionate intensity of feeling. He is like a man born out of due time and though he stands alone among the men of his age, unable to endure the easy cynicism of men

like Gay, who held life to be a jest, or to follow the genial humanity of Steele and the graceful urbanities of Addison, yet he was not great enough to rise above them. On the critical side he is supremely great; none could despise the world and mankind with such brilliant fury. But he had no alternative; nothing to put in the place of material ambition. He is at heart as worldly as Defoe; and it is a part of his tragedy that he recognises the fact."

For *one* thing, Swift's satire was aimed not against individual personalities but against the whole community, rather against the whole human species. In a letter to Pope, dated September 29, 1725, the Dean declares his profession as man and satirist:—

"I have ever hated all nations, professions, and communities, and all my love is towards individuals. For instance, I hate the tribe of lawyers, but I love Counsellor Such-a-one, and Judge Such-a-one: so with physicians——I will not speak of my own trade——soldiers, English, Scot, French and the rest. But principally I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth. This is the system upon which I have governed myself many years, but do not tell, and so I shall go on till I have done with them. I have got materials towards a treatise, proving the falsity of that definition *animal rationale* (man is a reasonable animal) and show it should be only *rationis capas* (only with latent capacity for reasonableness). Upon this great foundation of misanthropy......the whole building of my *Travels* is erected; and I will never have peace of mind, till all honest men are of my opinion." Swift was prompted by a consuming moral indignation 'to vex the world rather than divert it.' Indignation, according to the ancient poet, made verses. *Gulliver's Travels* was a veritable bomb thrown in the midst of men, to serve as shock-treatment, to stir up the indignation in a world too complacent.

In the next place, Swift has his *technique* as a satirist. Satire is the product of a highly civilised society. It is one of the demands of such a society that even when we abuse like gentlemen. If a man is an idiot, let him be told so in a polite manner. Therefore a special technique is needed by the

satirist if he has to make all that he says effective. Each word must tell; each stroke must be a hammer-stroke. Satire is characteristically a classical commodity : it is necessarily urbane and attaches greater importance to the form than to the matter. That highly classical quality of saying a thing which "was oft repeated but never was so well expressed" belongs essentially to satire.

Swift's satire proceeds from the particular to the universal. The first position among English prose-satirists is his because he goes to the very root of all human values. He tackles the very fundamental conceptions on which society is based. The very element of all human institutions is questioned by him. And he ends by putting the interrogation mark against the wisdom of human existence. For this kind of satire a technique almost perfect is required. Swift found this technique in the use of irony. It consists in saying nothing directly. Swift's condemnation is seldom straight. His approach is oblique. For instance in the case of *The Battle of the Books* a specific warning is given to the reader to beware of applying to persons what is here meant only of books with most literal sense. It is therefore, again, that digression is Swift's favourite device. In *The Tale of a Tub*, for example, there are no fewer than *five* lengthy digressions.

Another characteristic of Swift's satire is his capacity to amuse. Paradoxical as it may sound, the method of his satire has an element of the comic in it. He possesses the knack of telling a tale with vigour and interest so as to keep the reader's attention riveted on the subject. He takes particular pains to see that we never feel dull while persuing his works. For this purpose he makes use of the fable with all its circumstantial details, with all its realistic setting and its dramatic interest, with all the curiosity, suspense and surprise that it engenders.

Swift is a master of details. His greatest feats are achieved through realism of details that he keeps one upon the other. Sometime it is his manner of giving details, which achieves the effect he aims at. If a battle is to be waged between the Ancients and the Moderns, what more natural than that Bentley should fail to go up the hill because of his pot-belly. Details of the type are of the greatest importance. Indirectly they may

be non-significant. Through his artistic skill, however, Swift so combines or arranges them as to follow his basic conception to its logical end, missing not even one of the consequences of the act he describes. The result is that the reader feels irresistibly that he has actually seen the whole thing happening before his very eyes.

Still another characteristic of Swift's satire is his employment of the allegory to achieve his effects. An allegory is but an extended metaphor, a prolonged simile. When a whole piece of writing is to be understood in the figurative sense as opposed to the literal, the composition is an allegory. Best examples are Dr. Johnson's "Voyage of Life" in the essay-form and John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" in the novel type. Thus the *Battle of the Books* is an allegory, particularly the episode of the *Bee and the Spider*. *A Tale of a Tub* has as its main matter the allegory of the three Christian brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack who respectively represent Roman Catholicism, Anglican Protestantism and Scottish Presbyterianism.

But it won't do to simply describe Swift as an allegorical satirist who has chosen allegory as his favourite weapon. In Swift allegory is so employed that it no longer remains allegory alone : the form and the matter are combined, rather blended together with such exquisite art. Swift's symbols need to be interpreted profoundly. In fact Swift's method in his satires is hardly allegorical in the ordinary sense of the word. He does not use his symbols as other writers use theirs. He gives no fixed meanings to them. At least he never forces his meanings on the reader. Two pictures perfect in themselves are presented and their contrast conveys everything to the reader. Not a word is said by any of commentary.

Reduction to the absurd is Swift's habitual satirical method. The case of Partridge and his predictions has already been treated at length. The following is an instance taken from Swift's description of the Academy of Lagado in the island of Laputa :—

"When parties in a state are violent, he (*i.e.*, one of the professors) offered a wonderful contrivance to reconcile them. The method is this : You take a hundred leaders of each party ; you dispose them into couples of such whose heads are nearest

of a size : then let two nice operators saw off the occiput of each couple at the same time, in such manner that the brain may be equally divided. Let the occiputs thus cut off be interchanged, applying each to the head of his opposite party-man. It seems indeed to be a work that requireth some exactness ; but the professor assured us that if it were dexterously performed the cure would be infallible. For he argued thus : that the two half brains being left to debate the matter between themselves within the space of one skull, would soon come to a good understanding, and produce that moderation as well as regularity of thanking, so much to be wished for in the heads of those who imagine they come into the world only to watch and govern its motion : and as to the difference of brains in quantity or quality among those who are directors in faction, the doctor assured us, from his own knowledge, that it was a perfect trifle."

Swift is also in the habit of using offensive language at the height of his satirical fury—words referring to hidden parts of the human body (like 'anus', 'bowals', 'pudenda', 'arse', 'rrdure' *etc.*). On such occasions his satire assumes a combination of *invective* and *sardonic* tone.

As a consequence, "besides Swift's philosophy of life even Schopenhauer's seems comparatively cheerful." Swift's profound contempt for the average man is tremendous. Beside the cold fury of his sarcasm, Carlyle's dictum, 'Thirty millions—mostly fools,' reads like a mere flash of petulance. Swift disbelieved absolutely in freedom of discussion and joined issue with the Deists who held that Religion, being based on reason, would be strengthened by free inquiry. 'Free inquiry', sneered the Dean, 'why, the bulk of the people are as well qualified for flying as for thinking.'

The Lighter Side of Swift's Nature

Humour

Was Swift an unmitigated pessimist, an unadulterated misanthrope, a weeping philosopher to whom smiles and laughter were an unknown commodity as *x* is in Algebra ? The answer to this question is not a simple *yes*, although it would seem so in view of his terrific satire on humanity as well as his usual portrait in books dealing with his mind, art and writings.

The Partridge skit so well known and included in one of the sections of this Introduction is generally representative of the whole spirit and method of Swift's work. There is evidence in this episode of the double aspect of earnestness and play. There is definitely and conspicuously an element of comedy in the tragedy of Swift's life and writings. The year following Temple's death in 1699, Swift returned to Ireland with Lord Berkeley, then Deputy, as his secretary and chaplain. Lady Berkeley had "a pious love of sermons." One of Swift's duties was to read Boyle's *Discourses* to her. The chaplain found Boyle rather tedious. Therefore he penned his famous *Meditation on a Broomstick* and imposed it on the credulous lady as genuine Boyle. He was very much gratified, later, to hear her speaking very highly of his composition to her visitors. This practical joke is in line with the well-known one perpetrated by him on Partridge the astrologer, who also took it seriously.

Swift possessed a practical nature. He was a man of affairs, who took to literature because literature served as a means by which affairs could be directed. Swift lived hard. His energy was phenomenal. His writings are but an expression of his energy directed towards practical ends. The need of exercise of his energy shows itself, in his enormous sense of play as well as in his serious preoccupation with the life of his time. "The anecdotes related of him by his earlier biographers are legion, most of them turning upon the traslation of some whim into practical form, usually as a grotesque joke. The tale of his dispersing a crowd gathered to witness an eclipse, by sending a message that, according to the Dean's orders, the eclipse would be put off for a day; of his impersonating a poor usher at a reception, to draw the contempt of a rich fool; and of his disguising himself as a fiddler at a beggar's wedding, to discover the arts by which impostors live—all these bear testimony to that restlessness which could not be satisfied by work alone." With this lighter side of Swift's nature are to be connected the works by which he is chiefly known—his satires of *The Battle of the Books*, *A Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*.

The battle in *The Battle* is full of humorous scenes and incidents of fighting between the Ancients and the Moderns. One out of the many instances will serve the ends of illustration. It is taken from the account of the encounter between Virgil and Dryden :—

"The two cavallers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and, lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within, which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden. The brave Ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together, for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situated far in the hinder part, even like the lady in a lobster, or like a mouse under a canopy of state, or like a shrivelled bean, from within the penthouse of a modern periwig ; and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote."

The picture of the pot-bellied Bentley, 'in person the most deformed of all the Moderns ; tall, but without shape or comeliness ; large but without strength or proportion' is nothing if not funny. It is clear, therefore, that Swift was a comic writer. Comedy was his language just as English was. He made the battle of the books into a burlesque heroic episode.

The thread of comedy runs throughout the account of the attempts of the three brothers in *A Tale of a Tub* altering the coat their father has left them and in the ingenious, half-humorous justification of the changes they make. Statesmen of Lilliput cutting capers on the tight rope to earn promotion and preferment at the hands of their sovereign, the cause of the quarrels between the Little-endians and the Big endians, the philosopher spending seven long years to extract sunshine from cucumber, the discovery of the best way of cultivation of land by driving swine into the field to be ploughed, the incidents of Gulliver with the Brobdingian cat and rat, and a hundred other details in *Gulliver's Travels* are replete with the faculty of humour. "Every line, moreover," says Emile Legouis, "and every detail is vivified by a humour which consists in presenting the most improbable extravagances with an imperturbable gravity that procures belief for them."

"Swift", says Arthur Compton-Rickett, "is not always using heavy artillery, and there are some agreeable specimens of his fancy shooting in the *Rules to Servants*, and his burlesque, *Petition of Frances Harris* : better still in his *Lines on the Death of Dr. Swift*, which are not disfigured by the foulness that besmirches so much of his satire."

The historian of English literature then proceeds to quote a number of verses from this poem. We give below only one to serve as illustration :—

> Here shift the scene, to represent
> How those I love my death lament.
> Poor Pope will grieve a month, and Gay
> A week, and Arbuthnot a day.
> St. John himself will scarce forbear
> To bite his pen, and drop a tear.
> The rest will give a shrug, and cry :
> "I am sorry—but we all must die."

There is satire in the lines, without doubt. But there is amusement too.

The analogy between man and a broomstick is brought out in a humorous and witty manner in the following lines :—

"But a broom stick, perhaps, you will say, is an emblem of a tree standing on its head ; and pray what is Man, but a topsy-turvy creature, his animal faculties perpetually mounted on his rational, his head where his heels should be, grovelling on the earth. And yet, with all his faults, he sets up to be an universal reformer and corrector of abuses, a remover of grievances, rakes into every slut's corner of nature, bringing hidden corruptions to the light, and raises a mighty dust where there was none before, sharing deeply all the while in the very same pollutions he pretends to sweep away......"

Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, was without doubt the most devastating pessimist in English literature. He was so sorry that he was born that he wore black and fasted on his birth-days. Yet, in his despair, this supreme pessimist of English literature praised the great heath-giving powers of cheerfulness and happiness. "The best doctors in the world", he declared, "are Doctor Diet, Dr. Quiet and Dr. Merryman."

In fact Jonathan Swift is the strongest and ever-lasting proof that philanthropy, *i.e.*, love for mankind, is the best policy. The misanthropy of *A Tale of a Tub*, aimed principally at the breed of irresponsible wits, has resulted in Swift himself being included in the category as equally dangerous. The misanthropy of *Gulliver's Travels*, with the whole of mankind as its target, has come to be regarded as one of the world's most entertaining and popular books. The human race is smugger than Swift thought. It will respond handsomely to love. Hate fails outright to conquer it. Laugh and the world laughs with you. Weep and you weep alone. Despise humanity as furiously as you can, and humanity laughs your fury away. It is indifferent to the most poisonous words and it is definitely amused by them if there is a sprinkling of wit in them.

Swift's Prose Style

Jonathan Swift is the greatest prose-writer in the annals of English literature and one of the most original wielders of the pen in the history of the British Isles. In what way, precisely, is he entitled to that position? What is his *forte*? What special distinction gives him that reputation?

His Distinction : The unique position, the singularity and peculiar impressiveness of Swift among the writers of England is due to the thoroughness of his pessimism and his distinctive contribution to the development of English prose style. There is something stimulating, something awakening, something inspiring in his complete distrust of the world. If nothing else, it implies a break with, a departure from the conventional mode in which people of England were accustomed to view things aud persons of their country. "The real distinction in his view, his disregard of the accepted, the trite, the commonplace, all serve to startle us into eager attention. His keenness calls for answering alertness in ourselves; his suggestiveness is tonic; even his coarseness contains something of vigorous criticism that will not let us rest in conventional opinions, but bids us prove all things and call everything by its true name."

His Prose Style : Swift has an equally distinct place in the development of English prose style. In this sense his importance is historical. Sir Thomas Browne and other prose-

writers of the seventeenth century had written in the ornate emotional strain. The decorative tendency marked their writings in particular. Swift made a departure from the seventeenth-century prose tradition.

Qualities of Swift's Style : The old adage that 'style is the man' it exquisitely and most appropriately true of Jonathan Swift. Another generalisation which is very much applicable to this writer is the one enunciated by two great theories of prose style. Writing in the London Year Book on Prose in 1931, Herbert Read and Bonamy Dobree remark :—

' Style is not an ornament, it is not an exercise, not a caper, nor complication of any sort. It is the sense of one's own self, the knowledge of what one wants to say and the saying of it in the most fitting words."

Any one who reads Swift may see that in the writings of the Dean prose is never an ornament, or exercise, a caper or complication of any sort. The style of this celebrated writer reflects his practical nature, his intention to make it serve a turn and accomplish a purpose.

The first characteristic of his prose style is its clarity. This is the result of the simplicity of his language. His page is plainness itself. "Swift's greatness", says Sir Herbert Read, "consists in this more than in anything else, that however widely his vision might extend, however deep his insight, his mode of expression remained simple and single and clearly comprehensible."

The clarity of Swift's style is in evidence on every page of his writings. Here are a few passages illustrative of this clarity, picked at random from some of his writings :—

(*a*) To say the truth, I never yet know a tolerable woman to be fond of her own sex."......*A Letler to a Lady*

(*b*) "But a knot of ladies got together by themselves is a very school of impertinence and detraction and it is well if those be the worst."......*A Letter to a Lady.*

(*c*) "That the bulk of our people were to live miserably, by labouring every day for small wages to make a few live plentifully."......*Gulliver's Traveles* : Vol. IV Ch. vi.

(*d*) "Ingratitude is among them a capital crime, as we read it to have been in some other countries; for they reason thus, that whoever makes ill returns to his benefactor, must needs be a common enemy to the rest of makind, from whom he hath received no obligation, and therefore such a man is not fit to live."......*Gulliver's Travels* : Vol. I Ch. vi

(*e*) "His Majesty sent for three great scholars who were then in their weekly waiting, according to the custom in that country. These gentlemen, after they had a while examined my shape with much nicety, were of different opinion concerning me."......*Gulliver's Travels* : Vol. II. Ch. iii.

(*f*) "There was also among the ancients a sort of critic, not distinguishd in species from the former, but in growth or degree, who seem to have been only the tyros or junior scholars; yet, because of their differing employments, they are frequently mentioned as a sect by themselves."

A Tale of a Tub—Section III

(*g*) "While things were in this ferment, discord grew extremely high, hot words passed on both sides, and ill blood was plentifully bred."—*The battle of the Books.*

Two things are clear on a cursory perusal of the above. Swift scrupulously avoids using uncommon, big, bombastic, mouth-filling words. Ornament, attempt at decoration there is none. And these two things make for the clarity of Swift's style.

Secondly Swift's style has the merit of directness. The Dean had nothing but contempt for all kinds of shame. This led me him to despise literary affectation. Directness and simplicity are the virtues he valued most in his composition. He calls a spade a spade and not an agricultural implement. "Indeed, if anything, his style is too severe, too sternly practical, too reserved too dry. It represents men and things in too hard a light, with too sharp an outline, without the softening and colour which come from a sympathetic temperament."

In the next place, Swift used metaphors and similes very rarely. But when he used them, he did so very effectively and very creditably. Then these figures of speech add considerably

to the irony and the satiric nature of his writings. Given below is an extract from *A Tale of a Tub* : it is an excellent integration of imagery for the creation of the ludicrous effect or for purposes of powerful invective :—

"And whereas the mind of Man, when he gives the spur and bridle to his thoughts, doth never stop, but naturally sallies out into both extremes, of high and low, of good and evil, his first flight of fancy commonly transports him to ideas of what is most perfect, finished, and exalted ; till having soard out of his own reach and sight, not well perceiving how near the frontiers of height and depth border upon each other ; with the same course and wing, he falls down plumb into the lowest bottom of things, like one who travels the east into the west, or like a straight line drawn by its length into a circle."

Another notable feature of Swift's imagery is that he uses the experience of common life while he resorts to it. The following illustrative extract is from *Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* :—

"For human life is a continual navigation, and if we expect our vessels to pass with safely through the waves and tempests of this fluctuating world, it is necessary to make a good provision of the flesh as seamen lay in store of beef for a long voyage."

Swift kept away from Latinisms He strongly advised his young clergyman to avoid words like ubiquiety, omniscience and idiosyncrasy. These Latinisms make for obscurity, and Swift was a sworn enemy of obscurity in style. In the same way this writer stood against stylistic devices of contracting or abbreviating words, like incog. for incognito, phizz. for physiognomy, pozz. for positive, etc.

It should be clear to the reader of Swift that the Dean is fond of allegory and digression. Thus *A Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books* are allegories. And *A Tale of a Tub* contains five long digressions.

Swift on Style : Swift is the author of some letters and rticles which contain his own views on style. In his *Letter to Gentleman, Lately entered into Holy Orders* (*1721*), he strongly upholds a direct style and powerfully advocates avoidance of

obscure words and learned cliches which the readers or listeners may not understand. It is in this learned essay that we come across the famous pronouncement on style : "Proper words in proper places makes the true definition of style." Herein too he emphasizes that the frequency of flat, unnecessary epithets is often nauseous 'to rational hearers' and is a satisfaction to the vanity and affection of the speaker. "When a man's thoughts," he goes on, "are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them, so as they may be best understood. Where men err against this method, it is usually on purpose, and to show their learning, their oratory, their politeness, or their knowledge of the world. In short, that simplicity, without which no human performance can arrive to any great perfection, is nowhere more eminently useful than in this."

In another essay, *Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, Swift highly praises the simplicity of the language of the English Bible. "I am persuaded," he says in this pamphlet, "that the translators of the Bible now in use, and little altered since, were masters of a style much fitted for that work than any we see in our present writings." It was the aim and desire of Swift to imitate, rather imbibe, the style which he applauded in the case of the Bible.

In his *On Corruptions of Style*, he regrets that "the war (against France) has introduced abundance of polysyllables which will never be able to live many more campaigns ; speculations, operations, preliminaries, ambassadors, pallisadoes, communication, circumvallation, battalions, as numerous as they are, if they attack us too frequently in our Coffee houses, we shall certainly put them to flight, and cut off the rear."

Some Pronouncements on Swift's Style : It is interesting as well as significant to note the unanimity of opinion among those who have written about Swift's style. Here are a few select statements from standard writers :—

Dr. Samuel Johnson—"The rogue never hazards a metaphor. His delight was in simplicity. That he has in his works no metaphor, as has been said, is not true ; but his few

metaphors seem to be conceived rather by necessity than choice. His studied purity......... His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted and it will not be easy to find any embarassment in the complication of his clauses, any inconsequence in his connections, or abruptness in his transitions."

Arthur Compton-Rickett : Like other great stylists of the time—Pope and Addison—he achieves a triumphant clarity; but unlike Pope he is never epigrammatic, unlike Addison he has little plasticity of form. He is plainly and forcefully clear with a greater strength than theirs ; all the more striking and urgent for his lack of ornament and concentrated passion.

George Saintsbury : "..... there never, in English, has been a prose in which harmony was secured with so few means taken to secure it, and monotony avoided with so little apparent effort to safeguard the avoidance."

Emile Legouis : "The perfectly simple style has an incomparable exactness and precision."

G. A. Aitken : "Swift's style is very near perfection ; clear, pointed, precise, he seems to have no difficulty in finding words to express exactly the impression which he wishes to convey ...... There are no tricks of style, no recurring phrases ; no ornaments, no studied effects ; the object is attained without apparent effects ; with an outward gravity, masking the underlying satire or cynicism, and an apparent calmness concealing bitter invective."

H. Craik : "Of all English prose Swift's has the most flexibility, the most nervous of sinewy force ; it is the most perfect as an instrument, and the most deadly in its unerring accuracy of aim."

William J. Long : "That Swift is the most original writer of his time, and one of the greatest masters of English prose, is undeniable. Directness, vigour, simplicity mark every page. Among writers of that age he stands almost alone in his disdain of literary effects. Keeping his object steadily before him, he drives straight to the end, with a convincing power that has never been surpassed in English language. Even in

his most grotesque creations, the reader never loses the sense of reality, of being present as an eye-witness of the most impossible events, so powerful and convincing is Swift's prose. Defoe had the same power ; but in writing *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, his task was comparatively easy, since his hero and his adventures were both natural ; while Swift gives reality to pygmies, giants, and the most impossble situations, as easily as if he were writing of facts. Notwithstanding these excellent qualities, the ordinary reader will do well to confine himslf to *Gulliver's Travels* and a book of well-chosen selections. For, it must be confessed, the bulk of Swift's work is not wholesome reading. It is terribly satiric and destructive ; it emphasises the faults and failings of humanity......"

Oliver Elton : "In style, sculpure without beauty ; in temper, benevolence without love ; mastery of intellect without serenity. ......by stating these opposites we are not much closer than such a critic to a real divination of this mysterious figure whose artistic form is transparent and perfect ; crowning the accomplishment of the purely prose genius in English he stands apart from his environment, like Agonistes of the older drama."

F. L. Lucas : "Being what he was, he made a striking addition to the infinite variety of the world ; but one Swift seems to be quite enough. And his style is of interest as showing both what trenchancy the presence of imagery can give, and how much charm and colour its absence takes away."

Conclusion : Jonathan Swift is undoubtedly the most forceful writer of prose in the history of English literature. It seems he was divinely meant for writing great prose as Milton was for writing great poetry. Notwithstanding all Swift's practical downrightness, simplicity of language, and absence of ornament, the style of this writer is marked by great finesse. "A more subtle instrument, capable of more delicate persiflage, of more elaborate innuendo, it would be difficult to find. So little obvious are its devices, so persistent is its plainness, that we cease to suspect it ; but the writer neither slumbers nor sleeps. Always conscious of an end beyond the admitted one, always advancing on it stroke by stroke, he

surprises us out of the security into which we have been lulled, and startles us into keenness and nervousness by the paradox which lurked all the while hehind the sober, grave exterior. Of obvious decoration, such as balance, rhythm, antithesis—the half-poetic qualities of earlier prose—Swift has little. Indeed, it is clear that the nakedness and simplicity of his style were necessary to the rapidity and address of his attack. In the heavy rhetorical panoply of Euphues or Jeremy Taylor he would have been as helpless as David in the armour of Saul. Absolute, unmitigated prose he wrote—the quintessence of prose."

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THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

GENERAL

The Battle of the Books was the first notable work of Jonathan Swift. It was written by him while Swift was still at Moor Park in the service of Sir William Temple. The first touch of satire appears here. For Swift was in a galling position for a man of his intellect and attainments. Macaulay is responsible for the view that he was treated as a menial in Temple's household and ate at the servants' table. One cannot say definitely to what extent Macaulay is right. Sir William Temple was not a churlish employer. And there are indications of his generosity towards Swift. But the latter had a supersensitive nature. Therefore he could not but have felt that he was not being treated fairly. In other words he must have felt humiliated.

Ten years after Temple's death, Swift wrote to his sister, Lady Giffard, "I pretend not to have had the least share in Sir William Temple's confidence above his relatives or his commonest friends......" and added bitterly, "I have but too good reason to think otherwise." More than fifteen years still later, Swift says almost the same thing though in a different way, in a message to Temple's nephew, with whom he had picked a quarrel :—

"I am myself indebted to Sir William Temple, for recommending me to the late King, although withou success, and for his choice of me to take care of his posthumous writings. But I hope you will not charge my living in his family as an obligation, for I was educated to little purpose, if I retired to his house, on any other motives than the benefit of his conversation and advice, and the opportunity of pursuing my studies. For, being born to no fortune, I was at his death as far to seek as ever and perhaps you will allow that I was of some use to him."

This, Swift's dependence on a dilettante, was not the first straw that hard fate had put on the camel's back. All the more, therefore, there is reason to guess what sort of writing could be expected of a youngman so bandied about by misfortune. As a first important and satirical writing, however, *The Battle of the Books* is a highly creditable achievement.

Dates of Composition and Publication

Bentley's first *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* was published in June, 1697. *The Battle of the Books* must have been written shortly after. If somebody holds the opinion that it was begun before that date he will have to concede that it was seriously altered later. The references to Boyle, which are confined to the latter part, suggest that it was completed about the time when Boyle's *Examination* of Bentley's *Dissertation* was published, *i.e.*, early in March, 1698. The 'Bookseller to the Reader' gives the date as 1697 :—

"The following Discourse, as it is unquestionably of the same author, so it seems to have been written about the same time with the former ; I mean the year 1697, when the famous dispute was on foot about ancient and modern learning."

But the publication of *The Battle of the Books* did not come about till 1704 when the book was brought out in London as a subordinate piece to Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, a satire on the various churches of the day and completed while the author was at Laracor. Some critics regard it as a digression in the companion-volume. But Swift does not say so.

Why was the *Battle* not published when it was written ?

A letter by Sir William Temple about Boyle's *Examination*—it bears the date March 30, 1698—possibly gives the explanation. It shows, at least, that Swift followed Temple in thinking both Bentley and Wotton equally to blame for misapplied learning and 'foul-mouthed railing.' In Boyle's *Examination* it is admitted that Wotton, in his treatment of Sir William Temple, is modest and decent, speaks generally with respect of those he differs from.' The charge was that he had been 'prevailed upon to allow a place to the ill Manners of another man,' *i.e.*, Bentley. The letter above referred to indicates the kind of conversation that must have largely inspired Swift's work :

"Moore-Park, March 30, 98.

I think there can be no exception to anything in it (*Mr. Boyle's Book*) besides His Partiality to me ; which perhaps will be less forgiven him by the Dr., than any other fault. For the rest, the Compass and Application of so much learning, the strength and Pertinence of Arguments, the Candour of his Relations, in return to such foul-mouthed Railing, the pleasant turns of wit, and the Easiness of Style, are, in my opinion, as extraordinary, as the contrary of these all appear to be, in what the Dr. and his friend have written. So that I have as much reason to be pleased with finding myself in Mr. *Boyle's* good opinion, as I should be sorry to be in theirs.

You needed no excuse for anything in your former letter, nor Mr.——for giving you the occasion for it. What he saw, was written to a friend——who had undertaken——without my knowledge. Which I afterwards diverted, having no mind to enter the list, with such a mean, dull unmannerly Pedant."

One cannot be definite what the blanks stand for. What was it that Temple diverted ? Maybe it was *The Battle of the Books.* But even if some other book was in the mind of Temple, the letter suffices to show that Swift acted in compliance with the wishes of his master.

Sources of the 'Battle'

In the course of his *Observations upon The Tale of a Tub* Wotton stated that he was assured that *The Battle of the Books*

was '*mutatis mutandis* taken out of a French book' named *Combat des Livres*. *Mutatis Mutandis* is a Latin phrase equivalent in meaning to 'with due alteration of details'. The French book must be the prose composition with a lengthy title written by one Francois de Callieres and published anonymously in 1688. In this book are ranged against each other in order of battle all the principal kinds of Ancient and Modern Literature. In this book is also produced, in the ensuing combats, what the English translator described as a just piece of general criticism. The parallelisms in the *Battle* are not very prominent and may easily have been accidental. Swift denies his obligation to this or any other book, even for the smallest hint. Swift challenges in *An Apology* "......let the answerer (referring to Wotton) and his friend produce any book they please, he (*i e.*, Swift) defies them to show one single particular, where the judicious reader will affirm he (*i.e.*, Swift) has been obliged for the smallest hint ;..........." Of course, a debate or a controversy, like the one about the relative merits of the Ancients and the Moderns, would, at any time and under the pen of any writer, lend itself to comparison to a battle.

Another French book has also been cited as a "source" of *The Battle of the Books*. In his *Memoirs of Sir William Temple*, Abel Boyer has said that the hint for Swift's work was taken from 'an allegorical novel by Monsieur de Furetiere'. In a footnote this book is mentioned by name ; *Nouvelle Allegorique* .... Published at paris in 1658, it contains the description of a civil war in the Kingdom of Eloquence. Dramas, Epics, Histories, Romances and Speeches are marshalled as a troop against the army of the figures of speech, such as Hyperboles, Antitheses, Allegories, and Puns. Well-known writers are the leaders on both sides. Considering its date, this book might well be the source of Francois de Callieres's own book above referred to. There is very little similarity between it and the *Battle* : the general idea of a battle is the main thing they have in common.

Hawkesworth has described the *Battle* as 'an allegorical representation of Sir William Temple's *Essay*.' Sir Walter Scott and some other editors have noted a number of resemb-

lances. A striking point of resemblance is that Swift's choice of combatants to represent the Ancients is almost the same as that of Temple. Temple's and Swift's lists of the Moderns differ. Temple has written praisefully of most of his combatants for the Moderns. Swift had studiously included nearly all who had been disparaged by Temple.

The fact of the matter is that Swift's work is marked by extraordinary originality. The proof of it is not far to seek. The dispute between the Ancients and the Moderns seems to us foolish and futile. Temple's original pamphlet has gone out of the minds of coming generations. But Swift's booklet remains famous : time has failed to force it into the waste-paper basket. One thing, however, cannot be denied. Swift wrote his *Battle* when he was about thirty. Even at this age he had read enormously, thanks to Sir William Temple and his magnificent library. Naturally a part of this vast learning must have gone into the making of *The Battle of the Books.* That sort of conscious or unconscious percolation of the ornament of a great author's mind——that scholarship undoubtedly is——into his own literary output or achievement cannot be helped. Even a Shakespeare is not above or immune from this sort of thing. And the votaries of the goddess of criticism are kept going——we mean living—thereby. One such denotee of this deity has expended great pains and learning to prove that.

"Certainly the story is founded upon Virgil, though with many allusions to Homer. It consists of a historical introduction which is interrupted by the fable of the spider and the bee ; then the mobilization of the opposing sides, interrupted by the episode of Momus and Criticism ; and at last a fragmentary account of several battles, closed by the long episode of Bentley and Wotton meeting Temple and Boyle. The historical introduction, with the newly arrived Moderns challenging the property rights of the old inbahitants, the Ancients seems parallel to the difficulties between Aeneas and Latinus (*Aeneid* VII) ; and the catalogue of the forces goes back to both Homer and Virgil (*Iliad* II. 484-877, *Aeneid* VII. 641-817). The meetings of Momus with Criticism, and of Criticism with Wotton, are derived from the Allecto-Juno-Amata-Turnus

sequence in the *Aeneid* (VII. 286-465). Among the battles, the encounter of Virgil with Dryden is a parody of Glaucus and Diomedes (*Iliad* VI. 119-236); Blackmore and Lucan recall Hector and Ajax (*Iliad* VII. 224-302); Creech and Horace recall Turnus and Aeneas (*Aeneid* X. 636-88); Aphra Behn is Camilla (*Aeneid* XI); and Pindar attacking Cowley suggests Diomedes attacking Aeneas (*Illad* V. 302-4). In the final episode, the portrait of Bentley and his chastisement by Scaliger follow closely Thersites-Odysseus exchange in Homer (*Iliad* II. 211-69); Bentley and Wotton are modelled on Nisus and Euryalus (*Aeneid* IX. 314-449); and the attack on Temple is a parody of Arruns' attack on Camilla (*Aeneid* XI. 759-867)."

The scholarly critic goes on to point out additional allusions stitched into the above. "For example," he proceeds, "Jupiter enthroned, with a chain of 'second causes' attached to his toe, suggests not only the famous gold chain of the *Iliad* (VIII. 19) but Lucian's *Icaromenippus* and Bacon's idea of second causes as 'nature's chain,' of which the highest link is tied to the foot of Jupiter's chair? Of such allusions, the most interesting is an elaborate parody of *King Arthur*, Blackmore's doggerel epic on William III, for the whole of Swift's Momus-Criticism episode seems to caricature the parallel episode in that poem."

The beautiful fable of the bee and the spider requires a separate section to itself. Its treatment there will be inclusive of its origins. Let us end this chapter with a reference-in-this-direction to the finish of Swift's *Battle*. The inconclusive end of the fight is a good touch: literary combatants are never slain or slaughtered. The recent war with France must have suggested the indecisive finish. The closing campaigns of the war with Louis XIV had resulted in a sort of stalemate: the attempted invasion of England (April, 1696) had ended in smoke. Neither side could claim that its colours had remained flying: the trophies of either were, according to the Treaty of of Ryswick, to be returned to the other inside a period of six months.

Origin-cum-Occasion of the Satire

The Battle of the Books is the happiest of the satires of

Jonathan Swift. It is the least bitter and the most delightful of his satirical works. Moreover—perhaps also *because*—it is the most personal of his writings of the type. "*The Battle of the Books*", says Ricardo quintdna in *The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift*, "was on Swift's part the forcing of a personal issue. His patron had been attacked, so he chose to believe, by two unmannerly pedants, William Wotton and Richard Bentley. The insult called for revenge, and Swift turned upon Temple's two antagonists with a concentrated fury. From end to end *The Battle of the Books* is satire of personality, and though broader issues are brought forward these are made to arise directly and naturally from the affair between Temple and his critics—if pedantry seems to threaten Civilization, that is because Wotton and Bentley have affronted a man of taste."

Sir William Temple was a statesman and an efficient diplomatist. But he considerd himself a great writer at the same time. And he involved himself into a literary controversy regarding the relative merits of the classics and modern literature. In fact he had imported the dispute from France. There was a time when writers on Swift dismissed the immediate incident which was responsible for the production of his *Battle* as only a repercussion of a trifling squabble which had occured in France a few years earlier. Nobody thinks like that at present. If Temple's entry into the ancient-modern controversy and Swift's defence thereof are to be properly understood the real background of the quarrel needs to be grasped.

Temple wrote his *Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning* in 1690. The pamphlet does not deserve the neglect into which it has fallen. It is thoughtful and thought-provoking. It is definitely a contribution—which Swift's book is not—to the controversy that was raging on the French soil during those days. With considerable adroitness and argumentative skill Temple rebutted the two arguments advanced by advocates of modern writers. He showed, in the first place, that knowledge is not cumulative : It is 'the pure native force of spirit or genuis, in some single man' that really matters. The secoud point of the adversaries that since the forces of nature are constant genuis cannot grow less. Temple replies with his cyclic theory of history : though man remains essentially the same, physical and social

surroundings condition him differently. And he reinforces his argument by an analytical survey through the various fields of human endeavour—music, physic, rhetoric, grammar, philosophy, geography, architecture etc. But while dealing with literature he commits an error : he instances Aesop's *Fables* and Phalaris's *Epistles* as the oldest books which are 'still in their kind the best.'

Temple's essay formed the basis of Wotton's methodical *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694). Temple was torn threadbare and the author defended modern arts and science against Temple's theory that 'no significant advance had been made on the accomplishment of the ancients.' As ill luck would have it, the dean of Christ church assigned the task, as a gesture in support of Temple, of bringing out an edition of Phalaris's *Epistles* to a brilliant undergraduate, the Hon'ble Charles Boyle. "Through a wicked coincidence, one of the manuscripts required belonged to the King's Library (St. James's Library), of which Richard Bentley had just been made Keeper ; and instead of facilitating the necessary collations, Bentley saw fit to hinder them. Here, therefore, were the tinder and wood for an academic blaze."

Wotton had said explicitly that he was taking up cudgels on behalf of modern learning and knowledge, not modern literature in respeet of which he yielded the superiority to the ancient. His position, however, did not matter. He had committed the first offence : Temple's polite scholarship had been abruptly, hence unpardonably, questioned. Boyle's edition appeared on the first day of 1695. The preface referred sarcastically to Bentley's remarkable courtesy. In June 1697, a second edition of Wotton's *Reflections* was published with Bentley's first *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* as an appendix. With a wealth of learning that put to shame all who had sided with Temple, Bentley showed that the *Fables* of Aesop and *Epistles* of Phalaris were spurious and the writers not at all of unquestionable antiquity. The offence had now become doubly serious. The wits of Christ Church retorted with a clever piece called *Dr. Bentley's Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris, and the Fables of Aesop, examin'd by the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq.* published early in March 1698.

"*The Battle of the Books* was occasioned by Wotton's *Reflections* of June, 1697, which included Bentley's first *Dissertation*, while the closing incident of the satire is an allegorical representation of the victory which Boyle was supposed to have gained in March, 1698, through *Dr. Bentley's Dissertation Examin'd*—thus Swift's contribution is approximately dated. And here we may end the story, though in fact the war was drawn out to amusing length by the books and pamphlets which continued to appear. Of these only one needs mention —Bentley's second *Dissertation* (1699), where the wits of Christ Church were made to pay dearly for their cleverness, which was mercilessly turned against them by the greatest philologist of the age."

But the story of the origin-cum-occasion of the *Battle* does not end here. It has been remarked above that the personal element predominates in this satire of Swift's. Another ramification of the personal element remains to be dealt with. This pertains to Swift's animosity against John Dryden, the great poet of the classical school. Dryden was a distant cousin of Swift's. Since Dryden was the literary dictator of his age, his opinion went far to support or slay a rising maker of English verse. Swift, therefore, sent his odes to Dryden for opinion. Dryden looked at the poems, was far from satisfied and returned the pieces to Swift with his disapproval in the form of a couplet that has since become famous and is often quoted :—

"Cousin Swift,
You will never be a poet."

One can simply imagine how much this expression or comment must have infuriated Jonathan Swift who was proud as Lucifer. This discouraging remark by the veteran to one who was supersensitive must have been one of the potent causes which drove Swift to the choice of prose satire as his literary method. Swift never forgave Dryden for this.

Now Dryden had in his own way made a cautious assessment of both ancient and modern writers, *The Battle of the Books* offered Swift an opportunity to seek and satisfy his revenge against Dryden. In fact, the work was occasioned by two immediate personal episodes in the life of Swift. One was the ffence offered to his master, Sir William Temple, by Wotton

and Bentley. The other was the score he had to settle with Dryden for the disparaging comment on his talent as a poet.

The ancient-modern controversy was conducted in England by adherents of both. In a sense it had started on the English soil, as Swift maintains, from the pretensions of Dryden to be considered the equal of Virgil. Swift has nothing but scorn for such a pretension. In the famous *Dedication to Prince Posterity* (affixed to *A Tale of a Tub*), Swift writes :—

"I do therefore affirm, upon the word of a sincere man, that there is now actually in being a certain poet, called John Dryden, whose translation of Virgil was lately printed in a large folio, well bound, and if diligent search were made, for aught I know, is yet to be seen. Again in the Introduction to *A Tale*, Swift swoops upon Dryden for daring to enter the epic field of Virgil and to dedicate the different parts of his translation of the *Aeneid* to different patrons :—

"Our famous Dryden has ventured to proceed a point farther, endeavouring to introduce also a multiplicity of god-fathers ; which is an improvement of much more advantage, upon a very obvious account."

In *A Digression in the Modern Kind*, which is one of the prominent five in *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift states that contemporary writers try to make a big show not with real scholarship which is not theirs but with a number of Prefaces, Epistles, Prolegomena etc. Here Dryden is ridiculed as a preface-mongering writer :—

"Such is exactly the fate, at this time, of Prefaces, Epistles, Advertisements, Introductions, Prolegomena, Apparatuses, to the Readers. This expedient was admirable at first ; our great Dryden has alone carried it so far as it would go, and with incredible success. He has often said to me in confidence that the world would have never suspected him to be so great a poet, if he had not assured them so frequently in his prefaces, that it was impossible they could either doubt or forget it."

And in the *Battle* Swift's sneering scorn for Dryden goes the farthest. Here are fragments of the account of the encounter of Dryden and Virgil :—

"............He (*i.e.*, Virgil) cast his eye on the adverse wing, with a desire to find an object worthy of his valour, when, behold, upon a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size, appeared a foe, issuing from among the thickest of the enemy's squadrons; but his speed was less than his noise; for his horse, old and lean, spent the dregs of his strength in a high trot, which, though it made slow advances, yet caused a loud clashing of his armour, terrible to hear. The two cavaliers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and, lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within, which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden. The brave Ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together; for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in the lobster, or like a mouse under a canopy of state, or like a shrivelled bean, from within the penthouse of a modern periwig; and the voice was suited to the visage, sounding weak and remote. Dryden, in a long harangue, soothed up the good Ancient, called him father. ....Then he humbly proposed an exchange of armour, as a lasting mark of hospitality between them. Virgil consented (for the goddess Diffidence came unseen, and cast a mist before his eyes), though his was of gold, and cost a hundred beeves, the other's but of rusty iron. However, this glittering armour became the Modern yet worse than his own. Then they agreed to exchange horses; but, when it came to the trial, Dryden was afraid, and utterly unable to mount."

Surely, satire could not be more biting, sarcasm could not be more withering. Poor Dryden must have smarted like anything under Swift's lash. He had to pay dearly for his rhyming comment upon the first poetic ventures of his cousin.

Synopsis of The Battle of the Books

First of all we are told in the preface under what circumstances this booklet was written. that is, on the occasion of the well-known dispute about Ancient and Modern learning, between Sir William Temple and Boyle, later the Earl of

Orrery, on the one hand, and Wotton and Dr. Bentley on the other.

War and invasion generally proceed form want and poverty against plenty and riches. The moderns quarrel with the Ancients about the ownership of the highest peak, of Parnassus, mountain in central Greece, sacred to the Muses. They demand its surrender or levelling it down. The advice of the Ancients is rejected. In consequence a war takes place, in which rivers of ink are spilt. Both parties hang out their trophies which are nothing but books of controversy. These books are haunted with disorderly spirits, though they are often bound to keep the peace in libraries.

The author advises that the champions of each side should be coupled together, or otherwise mixed so that their malignity may be employed among themselves. This advice is not accepted, and the result is terrible fight in the king's library.

Dr. Bentley, the librarian, is a great foe to the Ancients. The Moderns finding themselves 50000 strong give the Ancients harsh words. Temple, a man of polite scholarship, is a favourite of the Ancients. Then fellows the incident of a quarrel between a spider and a bee ; either states his case and argues in favour of his superiority. At the end of this controversy Aesop applies the incident together with the arguments to the present dispute between the Ancients and the Moderns.

An account of the order of battle of the Moderns and names of their leaders is given. This is followed by a list of the leaders of the Ancients. Jupiter, the chief of the gods, apprised of the situation, calls a council of deities, consults the book of fate and then sends his orders below. Momus, Greek god of ridicule, takes the news to criticism whose habitation and family are described. Criticism descends to the scene of battle and sheds her influence on her son Wotten.

The battle between the Ancients and the Moderns begins. The various engagements are described . Paracelsus engages Galen. Aristotle aims at Bacon and slays Des Cartes. Homer overthrows Gonbibert, and kills Denham, Westly, Perrault, and Fontenelle. An interesting but highly satirical description of the encounter of Virgil and Dryden is rendered. Lucan fights

Blackmore. Creech combats Horace. Pindar and Cowley grapple each other.

The episode of Bentley and Wotton is narrated briefly. Bentley's armour is described. He delivers a harangue to the Modern generals. Scaliger makes a counter speech. Then Bentley and Wotton march together. Bentley attacks Phalaris and Aesop whereas Wotton contends with Temple in vain. Boyle gives the chase to Wotton. Meeting Bentley in the way, Boyle pursues both Wotton and Bentley and at last makes short work of both.

Critical Summary of The Battle of the Books

A Tale of a Tub is prefaced by a veritable maze of introductory stuff. That is not the case with *The Battle of the Books.* There is the notice of the bookseller to the reader. It contains, rather is made up of, a succinct account of how the book came to be written. Then there is the brief warning :—

"I must warn the reader to beware of applying to persons what is here meant only of books in the most literal sense. So, when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understand the person of a famous poet called by that name, but only certain sheets of paper, bound up in leather, containing in print the works of the said poet ; and so of the rest." So it is autually *The Battle of the Books.* Moreover the mock-epic quality of the work is emphasized.

"The Preface of the Author" is also brief, only two paragraphs in length. It is not exactly appropriate to the character of the supposed matter. Like the author of the *Tale*, Swift remarks favourably on ineffectual modern satire. The second paragraph, on closer scrutiny, seems to be the announcement of 'the chief theme upon which the ensuing satire is to be a series of variations.' Besides the pressing, persistent solicitation of the earlier poems is gone. It gives place to self-confidence, impertinence, satiric imagery, indirection, and implication. Wit without knowledge, we are told, is a sort of cream etc. This is but the incipient revolt against reason.

The body of the booklet falls into five divisions. The *first* covers the outbreak of the quarrel between the books—of

ancient and modern authors in two separate batches—in St. James's Library which is at the moment in the keeping of Dr. Bentley. The author gives evidence of great ingenuity in investing the volumes with life. Similar skill is displayed in neatly fitting the details of the allegory to the actual circumstances of the controversy going on between the Ancients and the Moderns. No other part or aspect of this first incident of the satire as described by Swift has anything deserving the epithet 'remarkable'.

Swift has been, in a way, appealing to the old scholarship against the new. This appeal reaches its climax in the *second* incident of the main body of the satire, *i.e.*, the fable of the spider and the bee. "Things were at this crisis, when a material accident fell out. For, upon the highest corner of a large window, there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant.' A bee happens to fly into the spider's web and get enmeshed there. With great difficulty the bee extricates himself uninjured and unharmed. At a safe distance he perches to clean his wings. The spider, whose web has been damaged in consequence, looks daggers at the bee and shouts insults and invectives at him. The culprit is dubbed a rascal, a vagabond having no house or home, and living upon an all-round plunder of nature. To all this abuse the bee replies in a gentle but firm tone: 'You boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast...........' In short, the whole question boils down to this:

"Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itslef, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by an universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax."

Aesop overhears the disputatious and incriminating words. And he does the summing-up. The spider, with his love of dirt and self-sufficiency, is a fit representative of the Moderns. The bee lives like the Ancients who "are content with the bee to pretend to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice, that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature ; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, *thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.*"

High praise has been showered on the bee and the spider episode by all who have taken up their pens to write about *The Battle of the Books*. It is a beautiful piece of literature and has been brilliantly tackled. Great artistic ceonomy has been observed and practised throughout the description of the incident. Not a phrase has been wasted. Not a word is superfluous. There is a logical inevitability in the language used, and the satiric effect has been produced through disgust and directness.

The *third* incident consists of the arranging of the two hostile armies in due order, the description of the leaders on both sides, the engagement of the two battle-lines, and a number of hand-to-hand fights. In all the encounters, it should be noted, the ancients have the better of the moderns. Excellently handled is the combat between Virgil and Dryden. The ancient appears in shining armour (we are later told it is gold) and on back of a spirited steed. The modern, a sorry, unknown figure, is astride a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size, old and lean, whose ungainly trot causes a terrible clashing of the rider's armour. "The two cavaliers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden." Swift has so long kept us in suspense with regard to the identity of the opponent of the great Virgil. The device is highly artistic. It is only after the pea inside the helmet pops out and is discovered as Dryden's head that

the reader heaves a sigh of relief and is pleasantly amused at what has happened.

The fourth episode concerns the council of the gods in the Milky Way. In fact it comes in between the two parts of the third incident. Jupiter has convened the conference with a view to directing and watching the battle below on the shelves of St. James's Library. Momus, the god of ridicule and patron of the Moderns, takes alarm at the imminent fate of his favourites and rushes for counsel and help to the goddess criticism. The description of this deity is in Swift's best manner. She

"had claws like a cat: her head, and ears, and voice resembled those of an ass; her teeth fallen out before; her eyes turned inward, as if she lookt only upon herself: her diet was the overflowing of her own gall: her spleen was so large, as to stand prominent like a dug of the first rate, nor wanted excrescencies in form of teats, at which a crew of ugly monsters were greedily sucking..........." How terrible and how nauseating. Swift is a past master of disgust: nobody has beaten him in that field. One may have sometime seen a she-pig wallowing in a pool of dirty water, bespattered all over with mud, a whole battalion of young ones tugging and sucking at her teats. A horrible, repulsive sight! That is exactly like the picture that Swift gives of the goddess Criticism. Afraid above all for her son Wotton, she flies down to where the battle is in progress, and in her own way bucks up her children, the Moderns. God save one from the Dean's most forceful effects achieved through the medium of frightful disgust.

The last incident touches Wotton and Bentley. Narrated in mock-heroic fashion, their concluding adventures on the field of battle are but a metaphorical representation of their attack on Temple and their imagined rout at the hands of Boyle. With a bold front the two criticism-cousins march forward on the field of fight to assault the foe, 'resolving by policy or surprise, to attempt some neglected quarter of the ancients army.' Swift has portrayed them thus together in an epic simile :—

"As when two monrgel curs, whom native greediness and

domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds of some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow ; meanwhile, the conscious moon, now in her zenith, on their guilty heads darts perpendicular rays ; nor dare they bark, though much provoked at her refulgent visage, whether seen in puddle by reflection, or in sphere direct ; but one surveys the region round, while t'other scouts the plain. ....so marched this lovely, loving pair of friends, ..."

Marching thus forth with raiding intentions they come upon the sleeping forms of Phalaris and Aesop. A goddess saves the ancients from greater harm than the sheer stealth of their armour by the unworthy moderns. Thereafter Wotton and Bentley see Temple and Boyle by the fountain of Helicon where, having no idea of the impending danger, the two allies are drinking deeply 'of the Pierian spring.' Wotton casts his lance at Temple who remains unscathed. At this Boyle gives the chase to the two marauders, darts a lance of wondrous length and sharpness, and transfixes both. The account is given in another epic simile which deserves quotation :—

"As when a skilful cook has trussed a brace of woodcocks, he with iron skewer, pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs ; so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths, so closely joined that Charon would mistake them both for one, and waft them over Styx for half his fare. Farewell, beloved loving pair. Few equals have you left behind. and happy and immortal shall you be, if all my wit and eloquence can make you."

And that is the *finis* of this mock-heroic epic of *The Battle of the Books*.

The Mock-heroic Epic of 'The Battle of the Books'

An epic is a poetic or prose composition narrating in continuation achievements of one or more heroes. It is a narrative of heroic action which is the expression of a heroic character. The whole thing is conducted on a grand scale. The language is in keeping with the theme with an exalted intensity of feeling

and dignity of expression. It will be seen, thus, that the essential ingredients of this class of writing are a valiant figure or heroic characters, brave, heroic action in the form of notable achievements, a big scale—national or otherwise, and language that corresponds to the theme, *i.e.* exalted and dignified. Fighting or war—in the literal or the metaphorical sense—is also necessary. The supernatural is an element as well.

The best examples are Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* ; Virgil's *Aeneid*, Valmiki's *Ramayan* and Ved Vyas's *Mahabharat*. Later, however, the theme received an extension of the meaning at the hands of writers like Milton and Wordsworth. *Paradise Lost* of the former and *The Prelude* of the latter are epics in this extended sense.

Now *The Battle of the Books* describes a war waged between books by modern authors and those by ancient writers in the King's. Library. No doubt it is a supposed war, but it is a war all the same. Other charactristics of the ancient epic are also present. The division into books is a feature of the old epic. As shown in the foregoing chapter, the main body of Swift's *Battle* is made up of five incidents or episodes. The convention of a plunge into the subject matter has also been observed. The tradition of the grand style is maintained as well. The supernatural has been invoked too. In other words Swift has employed the conventional devices sanctified by Homer and Virgil. But his *essay* is a parody, in style and form, of the ancient epic. A trivial subject has been treated in a pompous manner. The occasional imitations of the Homeric style are simply felicitous. The allegory is manipulated wonderfully well. Because the tone is one of mockery and much has been made of a triviality, *The Battle of the Books* has been rightly styled a mock-heroic epic.

At the very outset Swift likens human form of government to the republic of dogs. "For, to speak in the phrase of writers upon the politics, we may observe in the Republic of Dogs, that the whole state is ever in the profoundest peace after a full meel ; and that civil broils arise among them when it happens for one great bone to be seized on by some leading dog, who either divided it among the few, and then it falls to an oligarchy, or keeps it to himself, and then it runs up to a tyranny." The

comparison is mocking. The very tone is one of humorous satire. The ancients are not prepared to listen to any talk of 'removal or surrender.' The supposed injury due to the height of the hill is "largely recompensed by the shade and shelter it afforded them."

Then there is the mock-epic description of ink as "the great missive weapon in all battles of the learned, which, conveyed through a sort of engine called a quill, infinite number of these are darted at the enemy, by the valiant on each side, with equal skill and violence, as if it were an engagement of porcupines." There is epic mockery, again, in the description of the ink—"This malignant liquor was compounded...........of two ingredients, which are gall and copperas, by its bitterness and venom to suit in some degree, as well as to foment, the genius of the combatants".

Epic cataloguing of trophies of war, hung out by both the parties, is another instance in point. These trophies "are known to the world under several names ; as disputes, arguments, rejoinders, brief considerations, answers, replies, remarks, reflections, objections, confutations." These trophies are, in reality, books of controversy.

The description of war, too, is in the right epic style. In the Sanskrit epic, *the Ramayan,* for example there are accounts of mass as well as individual fightings. Corresponding to these, the *Battle* recounts the encounters between Virgil and Dryden, Gondibert and Homer, Lucan and Blackmore, etc. etc. Armies are marshalled. Charges are made one by one and victims fall to the ground.

In Homer's *Iliad* gods take sides. That is what is characteristic of all ancient epics. Swift introduces the supernatural in *The Battle of the Books.* Fame reports to Jupiter about the impending battle. A council of gods is convened in the Milky Way. In this conference, Momus, the god of ridicule, advocates the cause of the moderns. Jupiter reads the decree in the book of fate and gives silent instructions to the lesser gods who descend to witness the course of the Battle. Again Momus goes and informs the goddess Criticism. Swift exercises proper control over his imagination while describing Criticism. "At

her right hand sat Ignorance, her father and husband, blind with age ; at her left, pride, her mother, dressing her up in the scraps of paper hereself had torn. There was opinion, her sister, light of foot, hoodwinked, and headstrong, yet giddy, and perpetually turning. About her played her children, Noise and Impudence, Dulness and Vanity, Positiveness, Pedantry and Ill-manners." Then follows a description of her form and features...which has already been quoted.

Throughout the *Battle* Swift makes use of the epic style. Witness the author's description of the spider's web as a fortress, big holes in the web as chasms, deep fissures or gulfs. At the injury the spider stormed and swore like a mad man till he was about to burst. And the fortress shook as the bee got entangled in it. The spider imagined that an earthquake had occurred and that 'nature was approaching to her final dissolution'. All along the Dean is intellectual and vigorous. Emotional or poetic he certainly is not. The style just suits the need of the hour. His use of symbol and allegory suggests his matter-of-factness, the practical nature of his imagination even. The two similes at the end, bearing on Wotton and Bentley are nothing if not epical. In brief, the subject and the syle are perfectly matched.

Whereas Swift's travesty makes a mockery of the subject, its relentlessness, its efficacy, its realistic aud often grotesque images make short work of Bentley who "humbly gave the modern generals to understand, that he conceived, with great submission, that they were all a pack of rogues, and fools, and sons of whores, and d—d cowards, and confounded loggerheads, and illiterate whelps, and nonsensical scoundrels ; that if he himself had been constituted general, those presumptuous dogs, the Ancients, would, long before this, have been beaten out of the field." The annihilating irony, the naughty wit and the powerful satire are breath-taking almost.

A critic has correctly remarked that "*The Battle of the Books* is a mirthful thing of high spirits and gaiety." An epic, it is without doubt in view of the features which it shares with ancient epic poetry. Briefly, these characteristics have been enumerated above. But, when all is said and done, it is all a mockery. There is no actual battle. Yet the account makes it

out to be one. Both the sides come under his mocking genius. The entire pamphlet is replete with the spirit and genius of a laughing agent. Fun is made of men, manner, matter, and mode of an epic. The epic machinery too comes into play. The piece, therefore, is a genuine mock-heroic epic. And that it why the book has lived all these years and live as long as the English language remains to be spoken, read or written.

The Allegory of the Bee and the Spider

> A thing of beauty is a joy for ever ;
> Its loveliness increases ; it will never
> Pass into nothingness ; ....
>
> —John Keats, *Endymion*, II. 1-3.

Such a thing of beautv is the episode of the Bee and the Spider in Jonathan Swift's *The Battle of the Books*. Critics including even the detractors of this greatest of England's prose-writers have bestowed high praise on this *second* of the *five* divisions of the satire. It is poetry itself, though recorded in prose. There is eloquence in it : emotion and imagination find their place in it. The *Battle* owes its immorality in a goodly measure to this particular part of the satirical writing. It defies old age, and has stood the wear and tear of time wonderfully well

Some have called it the fable of the Spider and the Bee. Others have described it as the allegory of the Bee and the Spider. An episode it is, of course, for it is an incidental narrative inside a longer narraitve. A fable is a short story with animals as characters and conveying a moral. Aesop's fables and those of the Sanskrit *Panchtantra* are well known.

An allegory is a narrative description of a subject under guise of another suggestively similar. In other words it is a continued, extended, long-drawn-out metaphor. A word or a phrase used in its non-literal sense constitutes a metaphor. Thus the word 'back' is used metaphorically in the sentence—"Let us know what is at the *back* of your mind." So is the word 'kills' in the sentence—"A discouraging remark kills the enthusiasm in a young scholar." When a metaphor extends or spreads over a whole essay, story or poem, the latter is given

the name of an allegory. Dr. Johnson's esssy *The Voyage of Life* and John Bunyan's world-famous book *Pilgrim's Progress* are very good examples of allegorical writing.

One has not got to travel far to feel convinced that the essential element of allegory runs throughout the length and breadth of the story of the Bee and the Spider in *The Battle of the Books* The allegorical interpretation is given to us in Aesop's beautiful summing-up of the verbal dispute between the two insects. He swore that in all his life he had never known two cases so parallel and adapt to each other, as that in the window (*i.e.*, the quarrel between the Spider and the Bee) and this upon the shelves (*i.e.*, the controversy between the books of ancient and modern writers). "The disputants", said he, "have admirably managed the dispute between them, have taken in the full strength of all that is to be said on both sides, and exhausted the substance of every agrument *pro* and *con*. It is but to adjust the reasonings of both to the present quarrel, than to compare and apply the labours and fruits of each, as the bee has learnedly deduced them, and we shall find the conclusion full plain and close upon the Moderns and us. For, pray, gentlemen, was ever anything so modern as the spider, in his air, his turns, and his paradoxes ? He argues in the bahalf of you his brethren and himself, with many boastings of his native stock and great genius, that he spins and spits wholly from himself, and scorns to own any obligation or assistance from without. Then he displays to you his great skill in architecture, and improvement in the mathematics. To all this the bee, as an advocate retained by us the Ancients, thinks fit to answer—that, if one may judge of the great genius or inventions of the Moderns by what they have produced, you will hardly have countenance to bear you out in boasting of either. Erect your schemes with as much method and skill as you please ; yet if the materials be nothing but dirt, spun out of your own entrails (the guts of modern brains), the edifice will conclude at last in a cobweb, the duration of which, like that of other spiders' webs, may be imputed to their being forgotten, or neglected, or hid in a corner. For anything else of genuine that the Moderns may pretend to, I cannot recollect ; unless it be a large vein of wrangling and satire, much of a

nature and substance with the spider's poison ; which, however, they pretend to spit wholly out of themselves, is improved by the same arts, by feeding upon the insects and vermin of the age. As for us the Ancients, we are content with the bee to pretend to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice, that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature ; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light."

So that is the allegorical interpretation of the dispute between the Spider and the Bee. Much ink has been spilt to trace the episode of the Bee and the Spider to its origins. There is much mention in the *Battle* of the swelling of the spider. As the bee points out, the contents of the Spider's swelling 'over-weening pride' are 'dirt and posion'. Bacon is probably the source of these hints ; for in his *Advancement of Learning* Bacon says that it is not 'the quantity of knowledge' alone that can 'make the mind of man to swell'. So in the *Battle* as in the *Digression on Moderns* "flatulence becomes a symbol of pride, and thus pedantry is a kind of flatulence " It is Bacon, again, who in his *Advancement of Learning* likens an introspective, reclusive, little-read pedant to a spider : "......but if it (*i.e.*, the wit and mind of man) work upon itself, *as the spider worketh his wep*, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed *cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.*"

As for the bee as an element in the allegory, Bacon supplied it in his *Novum Organum* while comparing and contrasting empiricists with dogmatists : "The empirics, like the ant, amass only and use : the dogmatists, like spiders, spin webs out of themselves : but the course of the bee lies midway ; she gathers materials from the flowers of the garden and the field ; and then by her own power turns and digests them........"

This distinction, which later impessed Coleridge profoundly, touched the mind of Temple and he adopted the bee simile in his essay *Of Poetry*. Swift, acquainted with his master's essay, may have read Bacon and benefitted thereby.

What is of greater importance, however, is Swift's marvellous manipulation of the comparison : he has handled the incident brilliantly indeed. "............upon the highest corner of a large window, there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude, by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giants." A bee flies into the Spider's web. Freeing himself unharmed, he seats himself at a safe distance to clean his wings. The spider, whose fortress has been damaged, sights the culprit and shouts abuse and invective at him ; he is a rogue, a vagabond without hearth or home of his own, living upon an all-round loot of nature. To all this the reply of the bee in polite tones is : you are proud that you are self dependent, spitting and spinning out everything from within : "That is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast.........". In a nutshell, the question boils down to this :—

"Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round ; by an over-weening pride, which feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom ; producing nothing at all, but flybane and cobweb : or that, which, by an universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax."

We have already quoted in full the fine summing-up of this dispute by Aesop who overhears these quarrelsome arguments and recriminating phrases.

From beginning to end of the allegory, the artistic enonomy observed and practised is wonderful indeed. Not a phrase is wasted. Not a word is superfluous. Every expression is a symbol of some thought. From line to line, without having to read in between, the meaning is brought out with logical inevitability. The satiric effect is produced by means which are the peculiar property of this prose-writer. "The spider's every word and the entire series of images applied to him by the bee and by Aesop are nauseous. It is through disgust that Swift habitually attains his most forcible effects : all that is

unacceptable to reasons given an emotional repulsiveness so strong that it is attended by a definite visceral reaction. There is nothing quite comparable to Swift's mastery of disgust. Physical sensations of a different sort other writers have known how to arouse. Only Swift makes as retch at the irrational. "The prose-style of the book is Swift's best. "Concrete, homely speech; fresh figures, with no varnish of 'rhetoric'; quick, colloquial rhythms; syntax so idiomatic, expressive, so plainly hinged and turned, that it seems the language of proverbs."

The Battle of the Books—A Contribution or Satire only ?

The controversy regarding the relative merits of the ancient and the modern writers had started on the continent. It was raging in France particularly. In its then form it was imported into England by Sir William Temple who considered himself a great writer in addition to being a statesman and diplomatist. His essay *Of Ancient and Modern Learning* (1690) had begun the controversy in his country. Its theme was sternly questioned and contradicted by Wotton in his *Reflection Upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1694). In the second edition of his *Reflections* (1697) Wotton made room for a *Dissertation* by Dr. Bentley who rather rudely called into question both Temple's judgment and Charles Boyle's edition (paraphrasing the judgment of Temple) of Phalaris's *Epistles*. A second *Dissertation* by Bentley was published as well. This was the sort of controversy into which Temple had got involved.

Swift was at the time in the employ of Temple. The latter was a name for his polite learning. This learning had been questioned by two pedants, Wotton and Bentley, as Swift called them. The matter was serious. Swift's master had been insulted. The offenders must be taught the lesson of their lives. To assist and defend Temple Swift wrote *The Battle of the Books.* In that sense and to that extent alone was Swift's essay a contribution to the controversy that was in progress then. In reality, however, it was *not* a contribution to this literary dispute. It is a satire on the said controversy.

The Battle of the Books is one of its author's most detached and enjoyable writings. "It is a shame", observes a critic, "that the work must be closely identified with its occasion,

because Swift employs the presumed arguments as an excuse for independent comedy." Rightly assessed, therefore, the *Battle* is not a contribution to the ancients-versus-moderns controversy. At best it is but a parody of the quarrel. A parody is a composition in which an author's characteristics are ridiculed by imitation. It implies a feeble imitation, a travesty. Swift's production is a parody of, a powerful satire on, the controversy under consideration. It is a fine piece of literature, and therefore it lives still.

Wotton was a known historian of the time and Bentley was a distinguished philologist. They were far from being pedants. But their learning had grown out of a divorce between the materials of scholarship and the end of wisdom. This wisdom was the special gift of the classics. Swift attacked this divorce. Wotton and Bentley had committed the first offence : they had insulted a man of culture, one who was deeply read in the humanities.

On an examination of Swift's work as a moral satire, its basis will be found in the theories of Temple enunciated in his essay *Of Poetry*. The *Battle* is nothing but advocacy of taste as an expression of character. The conclusion at which Swift had arrived was that a good book is one which carries with it the approval of a 'good' man. Considered in this light, literature is a sure measure of social health. If the society is good, it will give no quarter to bad writers because they will fail to find readers.

"The enemies of good taste are those who offend on both sides : the poetasters, hack journalists, pedants, who manufacture trash ; and the corrupt judges who read and recommend it. That Swift gives this class the name of 'moderns' is less an attempt at definition than a tribute to Sir William Temple ; for Swift traces their descent from antiquity. Similarly the leaders of the moderns happen to be identified as Willian Wotton and Richard Bentley not because these are the worst writers or worst critics of the age but because they had disagreed with Temple." In this sense the *Battle* is a satire on both parties in the controversy. Both sides, in a way, come under the lash of Swift's satire.

But, definitely and definitively, Swift's book is not a contribution to the controversy. Writings relevant from the pens

of Temple, Wotton and Bentley are contributions. They put forth ideas. They produce arguments—in favour of and against the side they support. To look upon *The Battle of the Books* as a chapter in the story of ideas and arguments is as misleading and ludicrous as to regard Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* as chapters in the history of ancient Rome. Even moral issues are out of place here. Swift's humour finds expression in the form of a brilliant bit of comic prose, and that is all. Of course the brilliancy of Swift's composition grows out of a cross play of allusions. It cannot be properly understood and appreciated as long as the reader does not recognise these allusions. For instance the charm and the wit of Dryden's exchange of his 'rusty iron' armour with Virgil's armour of 'gold' is missed altogether if the student of Swift does not know that Dryden translated Virgil's *Aeneid*. In case the reader understands the allusion, the incident becomes less an argument for the inferiority of the modern to the ancient than a little but delicious farce out of the art of great comic writing.

And where are arguments in *The Battle of the Books* ? The advocates of the moderns put forth two main arguments in favour of their contention. All knowledge, they said, is progressive ; therefore the moderns could not but be an improvement upon the ancients. Secondly, the forces of nature, they argued, are constant ; therefore genuis cannot grow less. Temple, in his thesis, rebutted both these arguments by counter-arguments. He met the first point with the theory that knowledge is not cumulative, and it is 'the pure native force of spirit or genuis in some single man' that counts, not the cultural heritage, which extinguishes rather than feeds the flame of genuis. To the second point Temple replied with his cyclic theory of history though man remains essentially the same, physical and social surroundings condition him differently—'though there are or have been sometimes dwarfs and sometimes giants in the world, yet it does not follow that there must be such in every age, nor in every country.' And, furthermore, what is really very creditable, Temple admits that the classics of Europe are indebted to the eastern civilisations and cuitures—'light travels from the east'—like the Indian, the Chinese, and the Egyptian.

The present writer believes that it is this declaration of Temple that made Swift emphasize the wandering habit of the bee and corresponding 'ranging' propensity of the ancients for collecting and bringing home honey and wax. 'Thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.' The ancient Greeks and Romans travelled to the East for sweetness and light. Here is the reality of the controversy under discussion. This is actually the battle of ideas.

Swift's is simply *The Battle of the Books*. Therefore it is not a contribution to the controversy. It is merely a parody of, a powerful yet beautiful satire on, that controversy. It is an immortal piece of comic prose-composition. It is on that account that "though the justice of the years has long since removed the dunces' caps from the heads of Wotton and Bentley, their simulacra that indulge in such antics throughout Swift's piece will to the end of time remain contemptible in a very real sense."

The Supernatural in the "Battle"

The supernatural is an essential element in the composition of the ancient epic. Homer's *Iliad* instances the fact considerably. In the ten years' war of Troy between the Greeks and the Trojans, gods take sides. The ancient Indian epics—the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharta*—exemplify the fact too. But what is true of the epics mentioned applies invariably to the epics of all the world's literatures belonging to antiquity. *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift, if for no other purpose at least for this that it aims at being a full-fledged ridiculous imitation of the epic of old times, makes profuse use of the supernatural.

The artistic necessity and utility of the element of the supernatural is obvious. There are certain happenings in the life of man, which he cannot claim responsibility for. Man's power, even today with our scientific inventions and technical advance, is characterized by limitations and inhibitions. There are chance occurrences, unforeseen incidents and unexpected happenings. The mind of man in the very morning of creation was incapable of offering a scientific explanation of these human experiences. The primitive human mind—even modern

science has failed to put man on the pedestal of Divinity—easily and readily ascribed incidents and occurences over which man had no control whatever to powers unseen and forces inscrutable. Hence the belief in supernatural agencies and superhuman powers like gods, goddesses, ghosts, witches, spirits etc. Since art is nothing but a representation of life and literature is an art, comparatively sensible writers or composers deemed it essential and useful to introduce the supernatural in their productions, written or oral.

The mock-heroic epic of *The Battle of the Books* is no exception When the forces of the Ancients and the Moderns are properly marshalled and the fight is imminent, fame flies up straight to Jupiter, the sovere gn of the gods, to whom she delivers a faithful report of all that has passed between the two parties in the King's Library. Greatly concerned Jupiter convenes a council of the gods in the Milky Way and declares the occasion for calling the conference. Momus, the god of ridicule and patron of the Moderns, makes an excellent speech in favour of his fallowers. The answer comes from Pallas, the protectress of the Ancients. The assembly being divided—for gods are but our creation and like their makers have dissensions and differences of their own—. Jupiter sends for the book of fate. Having silently read the decree, he remains silent but imparts necessary instructions to the lesser gods who immediately descend to the pinnacle of the regal library and dispose the parties according to their orders.

Meanwhile, Momus, fearing the worst, bends his flight to the region of a malignant deity, named Criticism. The description of the family and features of this goddess makes one's hair stand on end or makes one's gorge rise at it. Momus informs her of the impending battle and exhorts her to go to the rescue of the Moderns. Then Criticism and her train mount her chariot, and flying over numerous regions arrive, finally, at her beloved island of Great Britain, and enter the library unseen. Criticism advises her son Wotton to begin the assault and orders two of her beloved children, Dulness and Ill-Manners, to closely attend his person in all encounters.

Again, we have an instance of the supernatural coming into the affairs of men in the account of the encounter between

Virgil and Dryden. The latter has 'rusty iron' armour. The Ancient owns armour made of gold. After his surrender Dryden humbly proposes an exchange of armour, as a lasting mark of hospitality between them. This is a clever move, obviously. Virgil consents, for *the goddess Diffidence* comes unseen and casts a mist before his eyes.

In the episode of the duel between Lucan and Blackmore, the famous Modern darts a javelin at the Ancient with a strong hand, which falls short of its mark and is struck deep in the earth. Then Lucan throws a lance. It would have surely and certainly caused the death of Blackmore. Swift, however, is partial to Blackmore and does not want to mete out that fate to him. So Aesculapius, the Roman god of medicine, appears unseen, and turns off the point of the lance. 'Bravo Modern', says Lucan, 'I perceive some *god* protects you, for never did my arm so deceive me before ; ....'.

Here is another example of the intervention of deities in the affairs of men. It bears on the so-called meeting between Creech and Horace :—

"·········but the goddess Dullness took a cloud, formed into the shape of Horace, armed and mounted, and placed in a flying pusture before him. Glad was the cavalier to begin a combat with a flying foe, and pursued the image, threatening loud till at last it led him to the peaceful bower of his father, Ogleby, by whom he was disarmed, and assigned for his repose."

The next instance of the use of the supernatural in *The Battle of the Books* pertains to the encounter between Pindar and Cowley. First the Modern throws a lance, which misses Pindar and passing into the enemy's ranks, falls ineffectual to the ground. Then Pinder darts a javelin so large and weighty that scarce a dozen cavaliers, as cavaliers were in Swift's degenerate days, could raise it from the ground. All the same Pindar throws it with ease, and there it goes, by an unerring hand, singing through the air. Cowley could not have avoided immediate death : the aim was so sure and the javelin so potent. Luckily, however, he thrusts forward the shield that had been given him by Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Now both heroes draw their swords ; but the Modern is aghast and

disordered, and his shield drops from his hands. Finally, it is Venus again who takes charge and care of the remaining half of his body.

The supernatural appears in the last encounter of the battle, the one between Wotton and Bentley on one side and Temple and Boyle on the other. We cannot do better than quote word by word from the text :—

"He (*i.e.*, Wotton), in the meantime, had wandered......... arrived at a small rivulet, that issued from a fountain hard by, called, in the language of mortal men, Helican (sacred to the Muses).........Thrice with profane hands he essayed to raise the water to his lips, and thrice it slipped all through his fingers. Then he stooped prone on his breast, but, ere his mouth had kissed the liquid crystal, *Apollo* (the god of music and poetry) came, and in the channel held his shield between the Modern and the fountain........."

In this very episode, Wotton comes upon Temple, general of the Allies to the Ancients...........Wotton, observing him with quaking knees, and trembling hands, spoke thus to himself: "O that I could kill this destroyer of our army, what renown should I purchase among the chiefs,.........For he fights like a god, and *Pallas or Apollo* are ever at his elbow.........". The first part of his prayer, the gods granted at the intercession of *his mother* and of Momus. Thus it is that Swift successfully brings gods down to live among men and wafts men above to profit from their company of the deities. His mock-heroic epic is complete and consummate.

JONATHAN SWIFT'S

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

EXPLANATORY PORTION

THE BOOKSELLER TO THE READER

In the notice of the bookseller to the reader we are given a brief account of how the book came to be written. There was afoot a controversy about the relative merits of ancient and modern learning. Sir William Temple started the dispute in England with the publication of his pamphlet on the subject. An answer to this pamphlet came from the pen of W. Wotton, B. D., in the form of his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*. To this was suffixed an Appendix by Dr. Bentley. Temple had committed the blunder of citing Phalaris and Aesop as examples of antiquity as well as excellence in composition. In the meanwhile the Honourable Charles Boyle had brought out, at the instance of the Dean of Christ Church, an edition of Phalaris's *Epistles*. This new edition too had come in for criticism at the hands of Dr. Bentley. A heated controversy ensued. With a wealth of learning and wit Bentley had shown that the *fables* of Aesop and the *Epistles* of Phalaris were not genuine compositions and their authors were not at all of unquestionable antiquity. The scholars of Christ Church retorted with a learned essay entitled *Dr. Bentley's Dissertations on the Epistles of Phalaris and the Fables of Aesop, examined by the Honourable* Charles Boyle, Esq. This was published in March, 1698. Bentley's second *Dissertation* appeared in 1699. The greatest philologist of the time fell very hard on the wits of Christ Church. The latter's cleverness was mercilessly turned against them.

The Battle of the Books was occasioned by Wotton's *Reflections* of June, 1697. According to the bookseller's notice to the reader, it seems to have been written in 1697. But its publication was delayed till 1704 when it appeared as a piece subordi-

nate to *A Tale of a Tub*. The publication, like most of Swift's works was anonymous.

The fact of its anonymity strengthens the belief that the bookseller's notice to the reader was penned by Swift himself. The warning administered in the second and final paragraph—much shorter than the first—also lends credence to the view. It was Swift's effort always to keep away from personality in satire. "I must warn the reader," runs the exhortation, "to beware of applying to persons what is here meant only of books, in the most literal sense. So, when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understahd the person of a famous poet called by the name; but only certain sheets of paper, bound up in leather containing in print the works of the said poet: and so of the rest."

That the warning is also to be interpreted as emphasising the allegorical character of the book goes without saying.

This notice gives prominence to an account of the ancient and modern learning controversy. The account appears to have been written just before the publication of *The Battle of the Books* in 1704 Charles Boyle became Earl of Orrery in August, 1703. In the essay itself the account of the dispute ends with Boyle's attack on Bentlay and Wotton in 1698.

EXPLANATIONS

Page 1

Line 1. *the following Discourse—i.e., The Battle of the Books.*

discourse—essay ; treatise ; composition ; dissertation.

Line 2. *same author*—that is, author (writer) of *A tale of a Tub*.

Line 3. *Same time with the former*—almost simultaneous with the composition of *A Tale of a Tub*. It should be borne in mind that two pieces were produced or published as subordinate to the *Tale*. One of these subordinate pieces is *The Battle of the Books*. The other is *Mechanical Operation of the Spirit*.

The year 1697—As is clear from the dates of the pamphlets, the years 1698 and 1699, no less than 1697, were those during which the 'dispute was on foot.'

Line 4. *dispute was on foot*—controversy was raging. *about ancient and modern learning*—concenring the relative merits of the classics and the modern writers.

Line 5. *an essay of Sir William Temple's*—The essay under reference is the one on *Ancient and Modern Learning* which appeared in the second part of Sir William Temple's *Miscellanea* in 1690. This essay was answered by W. Wotton in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*. The first edition of the *Reflections* was put out in 1694. The second edition appeared in 1697 with Bentley's *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris and the Fables of Aesop* as an appendix. The third edition with Wotton's *Defence of the Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* was published in 1705.

Line 6. *that subject*—namely, Ancient and Modern Learning. The answer of W. Wotton has been mentioned at length in the note immediately preceding.

As is clear from the introduction, Sir William Temple was a distinguished statesman and diplomatist of the time. He died in the year 1799. Swift was in his employ for a number of years and was indebted to him for a number of favours. *The Battle of the Books* was written in support of Temple's side in the controversy. That it was not published at the time was also due to the advice of Temple. Temple was a man of polite learning. That two pedants (so understood and described by Swift) had had the hardihood of calling Temple's learning in question aroused Swift's anger. *The Battle of the Books* was the result.

W. Wotton B.D.—a learned clergyman of the time. Became famous for his sermons. *B.D.* stands for Bachelor of Divinity. His full name is William Wotton.

Temple's thesis in his *Ancient and Modern Learning* was questioned by Wotton in his *Reflections on Ancient and Modern Learning*. Wotton said explicitly, however, that he was defending modern learning and knowledge. In respect of literature he yielded the superiority to the ancients. In June, 1697, a second edition of Wotton's *Reflections* was brought out with Bentley's first *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*. Bentley proved that the letters of Phalaris were spurious. That is why Wotton and Bentley are put in the same basket by Jonathan Swift in his *Battle of the Books*.

Wotton was a great historian just as Bentley was a distinguished philologist.

Line 7. *appendix by Dr. Bentley*—the *Dissertation* mentioned above as having appeared in the second edition of Wotton's *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning* (1697). *Appendix* is subsidiary addition to a book or a document.

Dr. Bentley—the greatest philologist of the time Richard Bentley is the full name. He was born at Oulton in Yorkshire, was educated at St John's College, Cambridge, and then was appointed tutor to his son by Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester. Bentley remained in that household for six long years. A critical letter in Latin on the Greek dramatists shot him into repute. In 1692 Bentley delivered the first Boyle lecture entitled *A Confutation of Atheism*, seeking for part of his argument the assistance of Isaac Newton. In 1694 he was appointed Keeper of St. James's Library. During 1697—99 he was engaged in the famous controversy relating to the *Epistles* of Phalaris, which he proved to be spurious. His arbitrary revision of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was a venture in the field not quite suited to his genius. Alexander Pope has caricatured him in his *Dunciad*.

Line 8. *for authors*—as writers. Bentley questioned the antiquity of Aesop and Phalaris. At the same time he disputed their title to greatness as authors. The *Epistles* of Phaliaris he proved to be spurious.

Aesop is world-famous as the author of Fables associated with his name. Aesop's Fables are oft-read, oft-appreciated and oft-quoted. Aesop is believed to belong to the 6th century before Christ. The fabulist is held by some to be a semi-legendary person, said to have been originally a slave who received his freedom from his master Iadmon, a Thracian. The fables attributed to him are probably a compilation of those of many authors. The story that Aesop was ugly and deformed appears to have originated with Maximus Planudes, a 14th century monk who wrote a life of the fabulist. Landor has given us two conversations between Aesop and his fellow-slave Phodope.

Phalaris—a cruel tyrant (549 B.C.) of Agriaentum in Sicily. He is said to have roasted many persons alive in a brazen bull known as the Sicilian Bull. The epistles (*i.e.*, letters) ascribed to him were proved by Bentley to be spurious (*i.e.*, not genuine).

Line 9. *highly commended*—Sir William Temple had, in his *Ancient and Modern Learning*, bestowed high praise on the two ancients, Aesop for his *Fables* and Phalaris for his *Epistles*.

Line 10. *the doctor*—Dr. Richard Bentley, holding doctorate for learning.

Falls hard upon—criticises mercilessly ; severely finds fault with.

A new edition—'the new edition of Phalaris' is that published by Charles Boyle in 1695. 'Boyle replied at large' in *Dr. Bentley's Dissertations......Examined by the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esq.* The first edition of this booklet appeared in 1698. A second edition was brought out the very same year with the addition of 'A short Account of Dr. Bentley, by way of Index'. The third edition was published in 1699 with the addition of four pages of remarks occasioned by John Milner's *View of the Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris*.

The idea emanated from Christ Church wits. The subject was an exercise assigned by the Dean to Charles Boyle, later Earl of Orrery, who was an undergraduate at Christ Church then. But the elders took a large hand in the preparation and composition of the edition which was definitely undertaken to support the side of Sir William Temple.

Line 11. *put out*—published ; produced ; issued.

Charles Boyle—simple Charles Boyle when he was an undergraduate at Christ Church. He was created Earl of Orrery in 1703. And *The Battle of the Books* was published along with *A Tale of a Tub* in 1704. The bookseller's notice to the reader was written a little before the publication. Hence the Honourable Charles Boyle, now Earl of Orrery, here. His dates are 1676—1731.

Earl—British nobleman ranking between marquis and viscount. The feminine form is *countess*. In fact, foreign noble corresponding to *Earl* is *Count*.

Line 12. *to which*—that is, the Appendix by Dr. Bentley. *replied*—made answer or rejoinder. *at large*—at length ; with details.

Line 13. *learning*—scholarship. *wit*—power of giving sudden intellectual pleasure by unexpected combining or contrasting of previously unconected ideas, expressions or arguments : extraordinary intelligence or cleverness

Voluminously—largely and numerously ; with great coils, convolutions or intricacies of argument. The word is satirical and sneering.

rejoined—retorted ; wrote in answer. Bentley 'voluminously rejoined' in his *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris With an answer to the Objections of the Honourable Charles Boyle, Esquire*.........1699.

Honourable—used as a title of younger sons of Earls, and of children of peers below rank of Marquis, Maids of Honour, Justices of High Court, Lords of Session, members of Government or Executive Councils in Dominions and Colonies.

Esquire—title appended to name of one regarded as gentleman by birth, position, or education, especially in address of letter (abbr. *Esq.*).

Line 14. *highly resented*—very much felt angry or indignant.

Line 15. *roughly used*—insulted or offered affront.

Line 16. *the two reverend gentlemen, aforesaid*—the two clergymen, mentioned before, *i.e.*, William Wotton and Richard Bentley.

Line 17. *provocation*—incitement ; instigation ; irritation.

Line 18. *St. Jame's Library*—the Royal Library, known also as King's Library, in St. James's Palace. Bentley was appointed Librarian or Keeper of this Library in succession to Henry de Justel in December, 1693. The patent constituting him Keeper of all the Kings' libraries was dated April 12, 1694.

Line 21. *manuscript*—*i e.*, of *The Battle of the Books.*

by the injury of fortune or weather—spoilt or damaged by weather or chance happenings.

Line 24. *I must warn the reader*.........Unlike the satire of Alexander Pope, Swift's is far from personal. Hence the emphasis laid on the fact that the battle is the battle of the books, not of the authors.

Line 25. *in the most literal sense*—most exactly, as it were.

Line 26. *Virgil*—a celebrated Roman poet of antiquity. He was born in 70 B.C. and died in 19 B.C. His chief works are the *Aeneid*, the *Georgics* etc.

Line 28. *sheets of paper, etc.*—the volumes of books written by Virgil.

Line 29. *and so of the rest*—the same applies to others. The battle is the battle of the books, not the battle of the authors. Therein lies the parody, the satire, the allegory and the humour of the piece.

THE PREFACE OF THE AUTHOR

The Preface of the Author is briefer still. It comprises only two short paragraphs. Some critics have opined that it is not exactly appropriate to the character of the supposed author. Like the author of *A Tale of a Tub* he remarks favourably on ineffectual modern satire :—

"Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own ; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it."

Unlike the author of *A Tale of a Tub*, he seems here to be admittedly a satirist :—

" .... ; and I have learned, from long experience, never to apprehend mischief from those understandings I have been able to provoke : for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and important."

The Preface is supposed to be Swift's own composition. How are we to explain his 'long experience' in the writing of satire ? *The Battle of the Books* is his first notable work of the type.

"There is a brain that will endure but one scumming ; let the owner gather it with discretion, and manage his little stock with husbandry ; but, of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the lash of his betters, because that will make it all bubble into impertinence, and he will find no new supply."

The kind of spirit exhibited in the above-quoted satirical remark is not at all characteristic of the "impartial historian" of the great battle Nor is it, sincerely speaking, the property of Jonathan Swift. The 'long experience' of Swift, at least in literary controversy, never existed at the time of the composition of *The Battle of the Books*. Moreover, in *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift pours ridicule on the modern satirists who lash the world. And in *The Battle of the Books* he seems to be laughing more or less at both sides of the inflated controversy. In case the 'Preface' is a warning to Bentley and Wotton, it is still ironical in an amusing way.

The second paragraph, if carefully perused, seems to be the annoucement of 'the chief theme upon which the ensuing satire is to be a series of variations'. By the side of the pressing, persistent solicitation of the earlier poems, the self-confidence, impertinence, satiric imagery, indirection and implication of the present effort stand out in sharp contrast. Wit without knowledge, we are told, is a sort of cream etc. This is nothing short of the incipient revolt against reason.

EXPLANATIONS

Page 1

Satire—a composition in verse or prose holding vice or folly up to ridicule, or lampooning individuals ; this branch of literature.

Wherein beholders.........their own—those who looks into this mirror see all faces except their own. The idea is that the reader of a satirical composition believes that the cap fits other heads, *i.e.*, the faults or vices or follies mentioned are the property of others, not his own. That is the reason why satirical writings are liked by all readers : the offensiveness is not striking.

Page 2

Line 3. *otherwise*—even if satire offend. *the danger is not great*—not much harm is done.

Line 4. *to apprehend*—to fear ; to expect.

Line 5. *understandings I have been able to provoke*—feelings of offence which my satirical writings have aroused.

Line 6. *sinews*—muscles ; the physical part.

Line 7. *to relax*—to loosen ; to render weak. *those—i.e.,* sinews ; what forms the strength of the mind.

Line 8. *feeble*—weak. *impotent*—powerless ; decrepit.

Lines 5—8. *for anger and fury.........feeble and impotent.*

Explanation : This sentence occurs in *The Preface of the Author* in *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift. The writer says that there is no great harm even if the reader takes offence at satirical composition. The result in that case is that the reader grows angry and indignant. Under the influence of this feeling he is incapable of doing an injury to the satirist. There is no doubt that physically an angry person grows strong and violent. Anger and fury considerably increase the bodily strength. But they correspondingly decrease or take away from the mental power : the mind of the angry or indignant person is rendered weak and decrepit. In other words the angry man is incapable of hitting back, in the intellectual sense.

Line 9. *brain*—intellect. *endure*—stand. *scumming*—skimming ; the process of taking away the cream, *i.e.*, the best part.

Line 10. *gather it*—collect the cream. *with discretion*—prudently ; wisely. *manage*—make use of.

little stock—scanty or small store of intelligence.

Line 11. *husbandry*—economy ; careful management.

Line 12. *under the lash of*—under the stroke of ; so as to be in a position where it is liable to be struck or whipped by.

his betters—those who can hold a candle to him, persons of superior intelligence or brains.

Line 13. *bubble into impertinence*—reduce to absurdity. *and he will find no new supply*—and the person will be rendered bankrupt of all wit and intelligence.

Lines 9—13. *There is a brain.........find no new supply.* In these lines taken from *The Preface of the Author* in Swift's *Battle of the Books,* the writer admonishes persons of inferior intelligence who commit the foolhardiness of challenging or coming into clash with their superiors. The man of ordinary

intellect has not much endowment in the brain. His mental stock is meagre. Therefore it behoves him to make sparing use of it. In case he is so foolish as to throw the gauntlet to those who are his betters he is bound to be beaten to a pulp in the intellectual sense. In the process of competition he will be worsted and smart under the lash of those who are definitely superior to him. The result will be that his small or scanty store of intelligence will be soon exhausted and fresh supply being lacking his absurdity will be exposed and he made a laughing stock.

Reference is to Wotton and Bentley who, according to Swift, have had the worst of the fight with Sir William Temple and the Honourable Charles Boyle.

The metaphor used is that of milk that will stand but one skimming. Once skimmed this milk is rendered useless, impotent and worthless altogether.

Wit—here used in the sense of sheer intellectual jugglery, cleverness without the solid basis of knowlege.

Wit without knowledge—is hardly applicable to Wotton, though the reference is obviously to him. Perhaps the expression is a sarcasm on the mass of general information in his *Reflections*.

Line 15. *by a skilful hand*—like that of a Boyle or a Temple. The hollowness of the kind of wit possessed or evinced by a Wotton or a Bentley can be easily exposed.

Line 16. *froth*—foam ; scum ; small bubbles on top of liquid.

Line 17. *fit for......the hogs*—but worthless stuff. The adversary will be beaten to a pulp.

The explanation of this sentence is almost the same as that of the first sentence of the second paragraph of *The Preface of the Author*.

A FULL AND TRUE ACCOUNT OF THE BATTLE FOUGHT LAST FRIDAY ETC.

Pages 3—9

This full and true account easily breaks up into *five* parts. The *first* of these *five* begins at Page 3 and goes upto less than half of yage 9 ending with the first paragraph

on this page. It covers the outbreak of the quarrel between the books of ancient and modern authors in two separate batches—in St. James's Library in London. Like all fights the quarrel has its origin in want or poverty of merit among the moderns. The ancients dwell on a small plot of ground on the higher of the two tops of Mount Parnassus, the lower one being in the possession of the moderns The latter complain that their visicn is obstructed and suggest that either the ancients shift to the lower top or they be allowed to pull down the higher top with their shovels and mattocks. To neither of these alternatives the ancients agree ; rather they plead their antiquity, their great utility to the moderns, the absurdity of the plan for levelling down their abode and their readiness to help the other side raise their own seat. All this is rejected by the moderns. In consequence the difference grows. In this quarrel whole rivulets of ink have been exhausted, and the virulence of both parties enormously augmented.' The two sides, after the first engagement, hang out their trophies which are but books of controversy. Finding their way into libraries these books of controversy form separate sections of their own.

The author's advice that the champion of each side should be coupled together falling to find acceptance, a terrible fight ensues between the ancient and modern books in the King's Library. The keeper of the library, Dr. Bentley, the great philologist, champions the cause of the moderns. Proud of his valour, in an engagement upon Parnassus, he vows, with his own hands, to knock down two of the chiefs of the ancients, Aesop and Phalaris. Endeavouring to climb up, however, he is cruelly obstructed by his own unhappy weight and tendency towards his centres. That indeed is the unfailing disease or defect of all moderns. Being but a cobbler in the management of his charge and stung by his unsuccess in the achievement of his vow he comes to bear a cruel rancour to the ancients, which he proceeds to show in a variety of injustices and absurdities.

Meanwhile books advocating the cause of the moderns take stock of their total strength through a representative, in all fifty thousand. While things are in this ferment, discord grows extremely high, hot words pass on both sides, and ill blood is plentifully bred. A solitary ancient offers fairly to dispute

the case, and to prove by mainfest reasons, that his party are the prior possessors and that wisdom and antiquity belong to them. The moderns reject the premises and hold out that they are much the more ancient of the two. Plato who is on the next shelf hears their boats and bursts into an ironical laughter. Temple is a witness to the moderns' braggings and noisy preparations for battle. He gives immediate information to the ancients who also prepare for the defence. 'This Temple, having been educated and long conversed among the Ancients, is, of all the Moderns, their greatest favourite, and becomes their greatest champion.'

It will be readily conceded that Swift gives evidence of great ingenuity in investing the volumes with life. Similar skill is displayed in neatly fitting the details of the allegory to the actual circumstances of the controversy going on between the Ancients and the Moderns. The metaphorical interpretations of most of the details will be brought out in the explanations that follow. The reader, however, need not be too fastidious and keen on finding a parallel for every minute detail. The allegory in the main alone should engage his attention and elicit his apreciation. No other part or aspect of this first incident of the satire has anything very remarkable about it.

EXPLANATIONS

Page 3

Line 1. *Circumspection*—care ; wariness ; cautionusness ; taking everything into account.

Line 2. *Annual Records of Time*—'now called *Wings* sheet almanac, and printed by *J. Roberts* for the company of *Stationers*'. This is what Hawkesworth says. In the life-time of Jonathan Swift the sheet almanac issued under the name of Vincent Wing was 'printed by Mary Clarke, for the Company of Stationers.' Hence the phrase *Vide. Ephem. de Mary Clarke ; opt. Edit. Vid.* or *v.* is abbrevation for *Vide*—vb. imperative-see, used in formal or jocular reference to passage in book etc. The contraction *Ephem.* stands for *Ephemris* or its plural *Ephemerides*. *Ephemeris* means astronomical almanc or table. *Opt. Edit* is abbreviation for *Optima Editio* which is a humorous description of the current issue of a popular sheet. The

phrase *Ephem. de Mary Clarke* is, therefore, equivalent to the almancs of (printed by) Mary Clarke.

This almanc contained in columns the calendar for the years with predictions regarding weather, and other entries. There was, in the top left hand corner, a figure showing the signs of the Zodiac. The folldwing rhyme was printed besides the figure :—

War begets Poverty,
Poverty Peace :
Peace maketh Riches flow,
(Fate ne'er doth cease :)
Riches produceth Pride,
Pride is War's ground,
War begets Poverty, etc.
(The World) goes round

Lines 2—3. *War is the child of pride, and pride the daughter of riches.*

See the rhyme quoted above :—

"Pride is War's ground"

and

"Riches produceth Pride"

Denham in *Cooper's Hill* has

"While luxury, and wealth, like war and peace,
Are each the others' ruine, and increase."

Sir William Temple says, in his essay *Of Poetry*,

"Plenty begets wantonness and Pride."

It is not too much to believe that the rhyme was still in Swift's mind when he wrote in *Gulliver's Travels*, iv, chapter v, that "Poor nations are *hungry*, and rich nations are *proud* ; and Pride and Hunger will ever be at variance."

Lines 8—10. *Invasions usually.........poverty upon plenty*— Swift does not subscribe to the quotation from the *Annual Records of Time* in full. He concedes the truth of the first part, *i.e., war is the child of pride*. But he is not repared to subscribe to the second part, *i.e., pride is the daughter of riches*. Pride, he says, is nearly related to beggary and want, *i.e.*, poverty. In the sentences under explanation the author says that invasions usually

travel from north to south, that is to say, from poverty *upon* plenty. Hawkesworth replaces *upon* by *to*, or explains *upon* as *to*. May be Swift has in mind the continent of Europe. The northern countries of Europe are poor, being near the Artic Ocean. The southern countries are fertile, and so rich and prosperous. Consequently the northerners have been, pressed by want and poverty, invading the southerners. That is what is implied by invasions usually travelling from north to south.

grounds—causes. *quarrels*—fights ; battles ; wars.

Line 11. *lust*—sensuous appetite regarded as sinful.

avarice—cupidity ; greed of gain ; eager desire to get.

Line 12. *collateral*—of common descent ; from the same source. The idea is that lust and avarice are akin, literally, to pride may be even first cousins to pride. But they are, like pride, the offspring or issues of poverty.

issues—children ; offspring.

Line 13. *the phrase*—In his *Leviathan*, part (ii), chapter 17, Hobbes quotes Aristotle as numbering bees and ants 'amongst political creatures.'

Line 14. *the Republic of Dogs*—the kingdom or commonwealth or society of dogs. In politics a republic is a state in which the government is carried on nominally and usually in fact by the people and its elected representatives. Figuratively, therefore, the word has come to denote a society of persons or animals with equality between members. To begin with, dogs as animals constitute a republic. *in its original*—to beigin with, at the outset.

Line 15. *institution*—society; establishment or organization.

Line 16. *in the profoundest peace*—perfectly at peace ; with not a vestige of war or discord.

after a full meal—when all their wants are satisfied ; when they are not hungry or in want. That proves that riches or content is not the mother of war.

Line 17. *civil broils*—quarrels between different parties (groups of dogs) of the Republic of Dogs. A fight or war is said to be a civil fight or war when it is between fellow-citizens or fellow-countrymen.

Line 19. *falls to*—grows or develops into.

oligarchy—government or state governed by the few. Since the possessor-dog shares the bone with a few others (not all, mind you), it becomes an example of the oligarchic system of government.

Line 20. *a tyranny*—autocracy or dictatorship. The large dog is the sole proprietor and consumer of the bone and does not let others come near it, rather keeps them without it and so in want, the happening becomes a symbol of dictatorship or autocracy. An autocrat or a dictator generally tends to be cruel. Therefore dictatorship or autocracy is also named a 'tyranny'.

Line 21. *holds place*—applies ; is true or correct.

dissensions—discords ; differences ; quarrels.

Line 22. *Turgescency*—condition or state of being morbidly swollen or inflated or enlarged. Most probably, here the idea is of a female dog being in heat, *i.e.*, sexual excitement during breeding season.

Line 25. *abound*—exist in plenty ; are numerous.

the whole commonwealth of that street—the entire body (republic) of dogs in that locality.

Line 26. *manifest*—that is so clear, obvious.

of every citizen against every citizen—civil.

Line 28. *the prize*—the turgescent female or she-dog.

Line 29. *snarling*—high-pitched quarrelsome growl.

Line 30. *the happy dog*—the lucky or fortunate member of the Republic of Dogs ; one who 'seizes and enjoys the prize.'

Line 31. *war.........of invasion*—war of offence as opposed to one of defence.

Page 4

Line 1. *whether real or in opinion*—actual or imagined.

alternation—difference. Whether the want or poverty is actually there or exists simply in thought or opinion makes no difference whatever.

Lines 2—3. *has a great..............the aggressor*—want or

poverty is greatly responsible, as well as pride, for the aggression or invasion.

Thus, by giving two examples from the Republic of Dogs, Swift has established that poverty and not riches is the cause of fight or battle.

Line 4. *this scheme*—this line of reasoning.

Lines 5—6. *adapt it*—apply it.

Commonwealth of learning—kingdom of letters ; republic of the intellect.

the first ground of disagreement—the first cause of quarrel, *i.e.*, want or poverty of merit, obviously, among the moderns.

Line 7. *the two great parties at this time in arms*—the moderns and the ancients among writers, who were then in dispute, either asserting their superiority over the other.

Line 8. *form just conclusions*—draw the right inferences.

upon—regarding.

Line 9. *issue*—the exact point in question.

to conjecture at—to guess. *at* is superfluous or erroneous after conjecture in modern English.

Line 10. *inflamed*—morbidly excited.

warm heads —hot heads or leaders.

Line 11. *either faction*—*i.e.*, both parties. It is clear that Swift satirizes both parties in the controversy : he tries to be an 'impartial historian'.

pretensions—claims. *exorbitant*—grossly excessive.

Line 12. *the least overtures of accommodation*—the smallest inclination to be reconciled or to come to a settlement of the quarrel.

Line 13. *affirmed*—averred ; asserted.

Line 15. *Parnassus*—mountain in central Greece, anciently sacred to muses. Hence allegorically the place or abode of intellectuals.

Lines 16—17. *the highest and largest*—peak of Mount Parnassus, stands for the greatest excellence in learning.

time out of mind—from times immemorial ; from antiquity untraceable.

quiet possession—undisputed charge or ownership. *tenants*—dwellers ; residents.

Line 18. *the Ancients*—the classical writers of ancient Greece and Rome. *the Moderns*—modern writers.

Line 20. *a great nuisance*—a highly obnoxious or offensive circumstance. The nuisance is mentioned in the lines immediately following.

Line 21. *that part of Parnassus*—the highest and largest peak of Parnassus, owned and occupied by the ancients. *quite spoiled*—totally marred or destroyed. *the prospect of theirs*—their vision.

Line 22. *especially towards the east*—whence the moderns derive all learning. Be it said to the credit of Sir William Temple that he, in his *Ancient and Modern Learning*, admits the extreme antiquity and superiority of civilisations and cultures of the East like the Indian, the Chinese and the Egyptian. The moderns had only such knowledge of the learning of these eastern countries as was conveyed to them through the medium of Grecian and Roman writers. Thus their complaint was that the light that travels from the east was intercepted and cut off from them by the European classics. That is also the meaning, to the mind of the present writer, of the wandering propensity of the bee that symbolizes the classics of Europe : the insect has been gathering honey and wax from the east, *i.e.*, ancient Greece and Rome stand indebted to ancient eastern civilisations for the light that has come to them from the east. "Sir William Temple," says Scott. "affects to trace the progress of arts and sciences from east to west. Thus the moderns had only such knowledge of the learning of Chaldaea and Egypt as was conveyed to them through the medium of Grecian Roman writers."

Line 24. *their effects*—their property or belongings.

Lines 25—26. *summity*—an old form of *summit*—The word was commonly used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is strange, however, that it does not occur in Dr. Samuel

Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, the first lexicon of the language.

graciously—as a special favour ; out of condescension.

advance in their place—go up to occupy their peak. Funny indeed !

Line 28. *Shovels*—scooping implements for shifting earth etc., often in form of spade with sides of blade turned up.

mattocks—tools of pick shape, with an adze and a chisel edge as ends of head, used for breaking up hard ground.

level—raze it down to the same level as of the lower sumbit which they themselves inhabit.

Line 31. *a colony*—a settlement or members of a settlement.

grace—special favour ; benevolence.

Line 33. *aborigines*—original inhabitants ; first possessors

Lines 35—36. *shortened the prospect of*—reduce the vision of.

Line 37. *help*—remedy ; prevent. *injury*—damage ; disadvantage.

Line 38. *largely recompensed*—made up to a great extent.

shade—relief. *shelter*—protection ; help.

The moderns owe a good deal to the ancients. They get relief and protection from the latter. Under the protecting and comforting umbrella of the classics they live, move and have their being.

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Lines 1—2. State that the moderns or others, for the matter of that, cannot destroy the efficiency and superiority of the ancients. The fame of the latter rests on solid foundations. In the attempt the moderns would spell their own ruin, their failure, and expose their own hollowness.

Line 4. *raise their own side of the hill*—improve their own

position by emulating the ancients ; try to follow in their footsteps by bettering the matter and manner of their writings.

dream of—it is a mere dream, but an idle thought to diminish the repute and lower the position of the ancients.

Line 5. *the former of which* - that is, raising their own side of the hill.

Line 6. *give licence*—permit ; allow ; give leave.

largely contribute—help to improve their status considerably by suggesting to them significant themes and teaching them an exalted manner of expression.

Line 8. *the two expedients*—the two alternatives put to the ancients by the moderns.

Line 9. *on the one part*—on the side of the ancients.

Line 10. *allies*—like Sir William Temple and the Honourable Charles Boyle.

Leaders—like Aesop and Pindar.

Line 11. *on the other*—the side of the Moderns.

Line 12. *affording continual recruits*—maintaining a never-ending supply of fresh batches of fighting men. The numbers of the moderns were enormous, when one line was destroyed, more recruits were forthcoming in the manner of the present-day Chinese. Highly original and meritorious ancients were fewer in number. Second-rate modern writers were much more numerous.

Lines 12—14. *In this quarrel.........enormously augmented*—In the typical mock-heroic style Swift represents the controversy about the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns as a war. The writers are the fighters. Therefore, the blood they shed is the consumption of large quantities of ink used up in writings on both sides.

Whole rivulets of ink mean *very large quantities of ink* consumed in controversial writing on both sides. The more they write in this strain, the greater the bitterness engendered on both sides.

rivulet is diminutive of *river*. *Whole rivulets*—entire streams, *i.e.*, enormous quantity.

exhausted—consumed; used up. *virulence*—bitterness; malignancy.

enormously—very largely; hugely. *Augmented*—increased; made greater.

Lines 115—116. *missive weapon*—weapon suitable for throwing or for discharge from machine or engine. *Missive*, here, is equivalent to *missile*.

battles of the learned—intellectual or literary controversies.

quill—pen, because made once of the hollow stem of a bird's feather. The *engine* from which the missive weapon of ink is discharged and showered upon the enemy is the *quill*. In other words, full volumes are written in support of either side. The engine, *i.e.*, the quill discharges volleys of the missive weapon, *i.e.*, the ink.

Line 17. *darted*—thrown.

Line 18. *the valiant*—the great writers.

Line 19. *an engagement*—a battle; a fight. *porcupines*—kinds of machine with many spikes or teeth or rodent quadrupeds with body and tail covered with erectile spines (*jangli chuha* in Hindustani). The erectile spines of the quadruped or the spikes of the machine stand for the quills plied by the valiant of the two parties.

Now, it must be here understood..............an engagement of porcupines is, like its predecessor, an important sentence for explanation. Enough has been written above by way of that exercise.

This malignant liquor—virulent, harmful liquid, *i.e.*, ink which is used to inflict wounds, *i.e.*, painful, mortifying hits or blows, on the adversary.

Line 20. *compounded*—made up; composed. *two ingredients*—two constituents.

Line 21. *gall*—excrescence produced by insect on trees, used in making ink and tannin, and in dyeing and medicine. The word also means *typical bitter substance*; metaphorically, *bitterness*. The idea is that critical or satirical books written by either party to an intellectual or literary dispute create so much of bitterness and cause so much of smarting pain.

copperas—sulphate of iron ; green vitriol. This substance too is one of the ingredients of ink and is equally bitter and poisonous

Line 22. *venom*—poison. *foment*—foster ; stimulate ; instigate. *genius*—prevalent or dominant feeling or spirit or quality ; here, the spirit of fighting or quarrelling.

Line 23. *combatants*—fighters ; here, writers engaged in the controversy.

Line 24. *were wont to*—were accustomed to.

Line 25. *trophies*—arms etc. of defeated enemy set up on field of battle or elsewhere to commemorate victory.

There is mention of this custom of setting up trophies on both sides in *Battle of Sybota* by Thucydides. Swift read Hobbe's translation of Thucydides' work in 1697.

Line 26. *to keep itself in countenance*—not to feel abashed ; to avoid the disgrace of defeat.

Lines 27—28. *laudable*—commendable ; praiseworthy.

revived—brought back into existence or activity. *happily*—luckily. *in the art of war*—a reference perhaps to the Catholic celebrations on the supposed victory at the Boyne.

Lines 29—30. *whichever comes by the worse*—irrespective of whichever party is defeated.

The irony of it is patent. Writers belonging to both sides claim victory for their side, like Oliver Goldsmith's *Village Schoolmaster*.

"Even though vanquished he could argue still." *inscribed*—written ; recorded.

Line 31. *merits* : strong points. *the cause*—*i.e.* espoused by either party. Thus both sides claim victory. A dig at the integrity of the intellectuals. Although sympathetic towards and appreciative of the ancients Swift's satire is aimed at both parties to the controversy.

Line 34. *rejoinders*—replies ; retorts.

Line 35. *confutations*—proving false.

Line 37. *their representatives*—their title-pages.

Line 38. *magazines*—libraries, sections of which house books of controversy, are likened to magazines, *i.e.*, store-houses for arms, ammunition etc For it is a battle, though a mock one, which is the essay of Swift.

Line 40. *from thenceforth*—from then onwards.

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Line 1. *instilled*—infused ; filled. *preserved*—kept safe and alive. In his famous pamphlet on the freedom of the Press, *Areopagatica* by name, Milton says, "Books............do preserve as in a wioll the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."

Line 3. *transmigrates*—passes ; becomes incarnate ; or, even, migrates. *there*—*i.e.* in those books that have been written by them while in the body.

to inform them—to imbue them (*i.e.* the books) with spirit or character ; to animate them ; to inspire them.

The word "inform" is derived from Latin *informare* (from *forma*=form), meaning *give shape to, fashion.* Sir Thomas Browne uses the word in this sense in his *Religio Medici*, sect. 12 : 'if one soule were so perfect as to *informe* three distinct bodies, that were a petty trinity' Similarly we come across the word in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*, lines 156—58.

"A fiery soul, which working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay :
And o'er *informed* the tenement of clay."

Line 5. *cemeteries*—graveyards ; places for burial. Libraries are, in a sense, cemeteries, for books are repositories of what Southey calls 'the mighty minds of old.' Thomas Vaughan says in his *Anthroposophia Theomagica* (1650) : "For that part of man which *Paracelsus* calls *Homo Sydereus* and more appositely *Brutum hominis*...... This part I say, which is the *astral man*, hovers sometimes about the *Darmitories* of the Dead.' It appears Swift had read Vaughan.

Line 6. *Brutum hominis*—what Vaughan calls 'the astral man' ; spiritual appearance of the human form. *hovers over*—hangs in the air above ; loiters about.

Line 7. *monument*—stone or other structure placed over grave in memory of the dead.

Line 3. *vanishes*—disappears. *dissolves*—melts into thin air.

Line 9. *haunts over*—hovers over ; loiters about.

Line 12. *disorderly*—wild ; violent.

Line 14. *prudent*—wise ; proper.

Line 15. *to bind them to the peace*—to so confine them as to keep them non-violent.

Line 16. *invention*—device. *the original occasion*—the origin.

Line 17. *Scotus*—Joannes Duns Scotus (1265—1308), Franciscan, is said, though there is no evidence to prove it, to have been a fellow of Merton College, Oxford, and in 1301 Professor of Divinity at Oxford. He is also stated to have been a regent master at the University of Paris. Possibly he died at Cologne, there being a tradition that he was buried alive. Scotus was the author of a philosophic grammar entitled *De Modis Significandi Sive Grammatica Speculatix.* He has written a number of other works. His followers, the Scotists, were a predominating scholastic sect until the 16th century when the system was attacked first by the humanists and then by the reformers as a farrago of needless entities and useless distinctions.

Line 20. *concerted*—conspired.

Line 21. *by main force*—force exerted to the full.

station—status ; position of repute.

Line 22. *divines*—authorities or classics, persons skilled in theology or philosophy.

Lines 22-23. *where he had............hundred years*—Plato's had been the supreme authority or position among the divines for eight centuries. And then Scotus and Aristotle deposed him after a controversy that went on for some time. The fact of the matter, however, is that Plato had been dethroned by the theologians in favour of Aristotle long before Duns Scotus appeared on the scene.

Line 25. *decreed*—ordained. *polemics*—controversial discussions.

Line 27. *expedient*—device ; the invention mentioned afore.

Lines 28-29. *a new species of controversial books*—reference is to books and pamphlets relating to the ancient-modern controversy.

arose—arisen ; been written or produced.

instinct with a most malignant spirit—imbued with a very virulent spirit.

Line 34. *broils*—quarrels.

Line 35. *a world of care*—much care ; great precaution.

Line 39. *an ill prophet*—unskilful or unwise foreteller, for his prediction has come true.

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Line 8. *requisite*—necessary ; essential. *retained by*—in the service of.

Line 10. *The guardian of the regal library*—*i.e.* Dr. Bentley who was appointed Keeper of St. James's library on December 23, 1693, upon the death of his predecessor, Mr. Justell. Bentley was already a name for his learning and because of his excellent sermons.

Line 11. *valour*—perhaps with reference to his courage of conviction or his distinguished scholarship.

chiefly renowned for his humanity—principally known for his humaneness, his urbanity of manners ; his courtesy. This is ironical, for Swift in reality means the opposite. In the concluding paragraph of the Preface to his edition of the *Letters of Phalaris*, the Honourable Charles Boyle had mentioned Bentley's lack of courtesy. Bentley made a reference to it in his *Dissertation* of 1697, rendering the allusion to his want of courtesy as 'out of his singular humanity'. Boyle in turn adopted this translation, and referred to Bentley's 'humanity' in his *Examination* (1698).

The lack of courtesy complained of was this. A manuscript which could help Boyle in his preparation of the new edition of

Letters of Phalaris was there in the King's Library. Bentley, when approached for the same, hindered rather than helped. His refusal of the manuscript was 'the sparkle which kindled so hot a flame. Dr. Bentley does not quite clear himself of having been a little churlish concerning the manuscript.'

Line 14. *two of the ancient chiefs*—Phalaris and Aesop. Dr. Bentley, 'a fierce champion for the moderns', assisted Wotton in his *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, by proving that the works of Phalaris and Aesop, ancient authors cited and eulogised as examples of antiquity and scholarship by Sir William Temple in his *Ancient and Modern Learning*, were in reality spurious. That is the metaphorical or allegorical meaning of Bentley's endeavour 'to knock down two of the ancient chiefs.'

Line 16. *obstructed by his own unhappy weight*—retarded by his own false, showy learning.

tendency towards his centre—characteristic of all moderns, the spider-like quality of being prominently taken up with the ego, self-centredness and selfishness.

Line 19 *extreme subject*—very much inclined ; extremely prone.

light-headed—empty in the upper storey ; not much gifted intellectually.

speculation—ambitious thinking or hoping. Bentley's endeavour to knock down Phalaris and Aesop was but talking in the air, as it were. For the actual task he was utterly incompetent.

a wonderful agility—a remarkable nimbleness. *conceive nothing too high*—in speculation, pure and simple, the moderns are quick and ambitious and tall-talking.

Line 20-21. *but in reducing.........their heels*—but fail miserably in the actual trial or performance, even as Bentley did. *A mighty pressure about their posteriors and their heels* signifies, in phraseology metaphorical, their extreme dull-headedness, inefficiency for the job, which drags them down to failure.

a mighty pressure—'a special alacrity in sinking, as Falstaff puts it.

posteriors—hind parts of the body.

Line 23 *rancour*—malignant hate ; spitefulness ; inveterate bitterness.

gratify—satisfy.

Line 24. *adversaries*—opponents ; antagonists ; *i.e.*, the moderns.

Line 25. *fairest apartments*—most beautiful rooms. Books of or about moderns were put by Bentley on the best shelves.

Line 27. *buried alive*—stowed away in some dark corner.

Lines 28-29. *to be turned out of door*—to be thrown out of the library.

Line 30. *a strange confusion of place among all the books*—"Another (learned man)", wrote Charles Boyle in the *Examination* of 1698, "that was desirous to have a sight of the Alexandrian MS, and apply'd himself to Dr. Bentley very earnestly for it, met with no other answer to his request, but that *the library was not fit to be seen.*"

Bentley replied to the latter part of the charge in his *Dissertation* of the 1699 edition, thus, "I will own, that I have often said and lamented, *that* the library was not fit to be seen......... If the room be too mean, and too little for the books ; if it be much out of repair ; if the situation be inconvenient ; if the access to it be dishonourable ; is the library keeper to answer for 't ?"

Light is also thrown on the state of the library affairs in *Misson's Memoirs* : "The King's Library at St. James's is also in a miserable state : I am told that Dr. Bentley, who has the keeping of it, in the room of the late Mr. Justel, does all he can to restore it ; but his endeavours will be to no purpose, until the Master of it has leisure and will to have an eye to it himself. There have been books in pawn in the hands of the binders I know not how many years. King Charles II did but laugh at it. It is nevertheless a pity that so many good books, and so well bound, should be given up to the mould and moisture of the air, to moths and to dust." *The Memoirs* was translated into English by Ozell in 1719. The French original was published at the Hague in 1698.

With the above compare Swift's satire upon the library and its keeper : "Besides, it so happened, that about this time there was a strange confusion of place among all the books in the library ; for which several reasons were assigned. Some imputed it to a great heap of learned dust, which a perverse wind blew off from a shelf of Moderns' into the keeper's eyes. Others affirmed he had a humour to pick the worms out of the schoolmen, and swallow them fresh and fasting ; whereof some fell upon his spleen, and some climbed up into his head, to the great perturbation of both. And lastly, others maintained, that, by walking much in the dark about the library, he had quite lost the situation of it out of his head ; and therefore in replacing his books he was apt to mistake, and clap Descartes next to Aristotle ; poor Plato had got between Hobbes and the Seven Wise Masters, and Virgil was hemmed in with Dryden on one side and Withers on the other". Poor moderns come in for their own share. Surely satire could not be more satirical. That is why when the controversy is dead and gone, Swift's *Battle* still lives to be prescribed at the various universities.

Line 32. *imputed it*—ascribed it. *a great heap af learned dust*—an enormous mass of inferior scholarship that is of the moderns.

into the Keeper's eyes—a dig at Bentley's furious advocacy of the moderns.

Line 34. *a humour*—an inclination ; a habit. *the worms*—'dirt and poison' of the spider ; tenth-rate stuff of books written by modern authors.

Line 35. *schoolmen*—theologians dealing with religious doctrines by rules of Aristotelian logic, those who were ridiculed by the boy Francis Bacon as admirers and followers of a system of philosophy, which was nothing but a childish delusion, since in the course of centuries it had 'produced no fruit, but only a jungle of dry and useless branches'. Here is a hit at the moderns as well as at Bentley.

Swallow them fresh and fasting—Bentley had the stomach for worms as they came fresh out of the schoolmen ; he had a special aptitude for consuming this worthless stuff.

Line 37. *great perturbation of both*—as the result of his

devouring of the moderns both his spleen and his head got spoilt. Spite, ill temper, lowness of spirits followed from a bad spleen. Confusion words confounded resulted from a spoilt intellect.

Line 38. *by walking much in the dark*—utterly ignorant of the library-keeper's job ; knowing nothing about it whatever.

Line 40. *apt to mistake*—likely to commit blunders. *clap*—put or place quickly or energetically.

Descartes—Rene Descartes (1596—1650), a Frech mathematician, physicist and philosopher known as Cartesian. He lived a great part of his life in Holland and was invited by Queen Christina to Sweden where he died. The starting point of his philosophy is expounded in his chief work *Le Discours de la Methode* published in 1637. It is the famous phrase *Cogito, ergo, sum*—'I think, therefore I am.' Some of his principal physical theories upset Newton's discoveries. His influence upon the development of philosophy and science was immense. His influence extended to literature where the impulse he gave to the rule of reason is manifested in 17th century writers.

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Line 1. *Aristotle*—the great Greek philosopher (384—322 B.C.) was pupil of Plato at Athens. His works which had enormous influence on thought cover an extraordinary field. He created logic, the science of reasoning. His most famous treatises are 'Ethics,' 'Poetics' and 'Politics'. The versatility of Aristotle has become proverbial. He has written on Biology even. Thinkers and writers in a variety of realms depend on him for copious quotation.

Plato—the celebrated Greek philosopher (427 B.C. to 348 B.C.) was the son of an Athenian of an ancient family. He became a pupil of Socrates. After his very great Guru's martyrdom in 399 B C., he retired to Megard and subsequently paid three visits to the court of Dionysius I an II at Syracuse. About 386 B.C. he began teaching philosophy in the Academy, an olive grove near Athens whence his school derives its name. He composed dialogues which embodied his views. 'Theory of Ideas' was his principal contribution to thought.

got between—got sandwiched between.

Hobbes—Thomas Hobbes (1588—1679), a philosopher who resembled Bacon in the utilitarian importance that he attaches to knowledge. Nature and men are the objects of his enquiry. He, however, does not share Bacon's enthusiasm for the inductive method and regards science as essentially deductive. The one book for which he is famous is called *Leviathan or the Matter, Form and Power or a Commonwealth*—a book partly political and partly philosophical.

Line 2. *the Seven Wise Masters*—'For an account of the book see *The Seven Sages of Rome*, ed Killis Campbell (1907). Swift probably mentions the *Seven Wise Masters* as a sort of modern equivalent to the Seven Sages of the Ancients ; cf. Temple, *Ancient and Modern Learning*, ed. 1696, p. 28.'

Virgil—the celebrated Roman poet (70 B.C. to 19 B.C.), author of the well-known epic *The Aeneid.*

hemmed in with—enclosed by ; surrounded on both sides by.

Line 3. *Dryden*—John Dryden (1631—1700), the greatest literary figure of the Restoration Period in the history of English literature. He is one of the two—the other being Alexander Pope—topmost poets of the classical school of English poetry. He is the author of the most powerful political (poetical too) satire in English—*Absalom and Achitophel*, the best and a masterpiece of its kind His numerous dramas are best left in the obscurity which has been their fate. The best expression of his literary genius, however, is met with in *Alexander's Feast*, his most enduring one and one of the best in the English language. Dryden's prose and criticism also place him very high.

In the *Battle* as in *A Tale of a Tub*, Swift shows his dislike of Dryden for having said "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet". Here he mentions Dyrden with a writer whom he was known to have despised.

Withers—that was how the name of George Wither (1588—1667) was commonly spelt at the time. Wither is a lyric poet of great originality : at times he rises to heights of positive genius. But the bulk of his poetry is intoler-

ably dull. Perphaps his greatest title to fame is that he published in 1623 *Hymns and Songs of the Church*, the first hymn book to appear in the English language. Wither was at the time regarded as a typically bad poet, on account of his later work. The rare merits of his earlier work were not duly recognised till Charles Lamb penned an essay on *Shepherd's Hunting* and *Philarete*.

Line 5. *a progress*—journey ; going round about.

Line 7. *concert their affairs*—arrange their affairs in ant-icipation of the battle.

Line 10. *light-horse, heavy-armed, and mercenaries*—from the fuller account given below it appears that the *light-horse* are poets, and the *heaven-armed foot* are historians. *Mercenaries* are also heavy-armed foot, *i.e.*, historians. *Whereof*- of which (forces).

Line 11. *sorrily armed and worse clad*—poorly equipped in the military sense and had thin, tattered raiments on. The poor quality of historians is implied.

Line 12. *their horses large, but extremely out of case and heart*—their themes were big and imposing but the subs-tance was of a poor quality. *out of case*—in poor plight. *out of heart*—lacking spirit and courage.

Line 13. *by trading among the Ancients*—through transac-tions with the Ancients.

Line 15. *ferment*—state of encitement or agitation or tumult. *discord*—clashing sounds.

Line 16. *passed on both sides*—were exchanged. *ill blood*—animosity ; strife.

Line 17. *plentifully bred*—enormously aroused.

Line 19. *priority*—first consideration ; precedence. *due*—due to.

Line 20. *long possession*—proprietorship extending over a long period of time. Possession, they say, is mine points of the law. *Prudence*—wisdom ; sagacity. *antiquity*—ancientness.

Line 21. *merits towards*—services entiling to gratitude. The moderns owe so much to the ancients. They have borrowed,

if not plagiarised, so much of the ancients' learning and wisdom.

Line 22. *these*—the moderns. *the premises*—the aforesaid ; the foregoing.

Line 24 *if they went to that*—if it came to that ; if the point were stretched to argumentation.

Lines 25. *the Moderns were much the more ancient of the two*—The meaning of this paradoxical statement will become clear in view of what Bacon says in his *Advancement of Learning*—"And to speak truly. *Antiquitas soeculi juventus mundi* : These times are the times, when the world is ancient, and not those which we account ancient *ordine retrogrado*, by a computation backward from ourselves." In the conclusion of his *Leviathan*, Hobbes asserts the same idea : "Though I reverence those men of acient time, that either have written truth perspicuously, or set us in a better way to find it out ourselves ; yet to the antiquity itself I think nothing due : for if we will reverence the age, the present is the oldest." "The present age is really the oldest," remarks Collier in one of his *Essays*.

Line 28. *subsistence*—means of supporting life ; livelihood ; here, much the same sense as of substance.

Lines 32—34. *breeding*—rearing. *forging*—manufacture. The moderns say their all is of their own making : they do not own anything to the ancients.

Line 35. *ragged plight*—wretched condition.

Line 36. *jades*—horses (generally inferior, wearied or worn out).

foundered—broken down by overwork.

Line 39. *by G*—by God. *he believed them*—said ironically.

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Line 4. *precedency*—priority.

Line 5. *Temple*—Sir William Temple, statesman and diplomatist, in whose service Swift was at the time. The ancient-modern controversy was introduced into England from France by Temple's essay on *Ancient and Modern Learning*.

Line 6. *intelligence*—information. *thereupon*—upon that (information).

Line 9. *fled over to*—joined the side of.

Line 10. *conversed*—conversant. In Swift's time *conversant* was an obsolete form.

Line 12. *their greatest champion*—the greatest advocate of the cause of the ancients. In England it was Temple who first took up cudgels on behalf of the classics. The controversy started in England with his essay *Ancient and Modern Learning*.

Pages 9—13

Out and away the best part of *The Battle of the Books* is the allegory of the spider and the bee. It is a beautiful piece of literature. It lends immortality to Swift's participation in the ancient-modern controversy. We of the present day look upon the dispute as a trifle. It has even gone out of most minds today. But the *Battle* lives : it is a perennial production. In Keats's immortal words, Swift's contribution to, rather satire on, the controversy is a thing of beauty and as such a joy for ever : its loveliness is on the increase : it will never fade into nothingness.

The material incident fell out this way. 'Upon the highest corner of a large window, there dwelt a certain spider, swollen up to the first magnitude by the destruction of infinite numbers of flies, whose spoils lay scattered before the gates of his palace, like human bones before the cave of some giant.' A bee happens to get entangled in the spider's web which shakes as if an earthquake had come. Extricating himself the bee perches at a safe distance to clean his wings. The spider sights the culprit and, red-hot with indignation, shouts insults and invectives at him "A plague split you," he cries out to the bee, "for a giddy son of a whore. Is it you, with a vengeance, that have made the litter here ? Could you not look before you, and be d—— d ? Do you think I have nothing else to do, in the devil's name, but to mend repair after your arse ?" The bee is sorry and is soft-spoken in contrast.

But the spider is beside himself with anger. He calls the bee the worst of names—a rogue, a rascal, a vagabond having no

hearth and home and living upon a universal plunder of nature. To all this the bee replies, "You boast, indeed, of being obliged to no other creature, but of drawing and spinning out from yourself; that is to say, if we may judge of the liquor in the vessel by what issues out, you possess a good plentiful store of dirt and poison in your breast......" In short the whole question boils down to this—

"Whether is the nobler being of the two, that which, by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all, but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax."

The incriminating words are overheard by Aesop who sums up the dispute in a beautiful fashion. The spider with his love of dirt and self-sufficiency is a fit representative of the Moderns. The bee represents the Ancients "who are content with the bee to pretend to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice, that is to say, our flights and language. For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light"

The incident has been brilliantly handled by Swift. Critics have spoken of it in glowing terms. Not a word is wasted. All is as it should be. Well chosen phrases are put in the mouths of the spider and the bee. And the idea is superb, simply excellent.

EXPLANATIONS

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Line 13. *crisis*—moment of danger or suspense.

material—important; essential to the impending battle.

accident—event without apparent cause; here, incident. *fell out*—occurred; happened.

Line 15. *the first magnitude*—very greatly; the highest magnitude.

Line 16. *who spoils*—remnants of whose destruction.

Line 17. *palace*—the spider's web is so called.

Line 18. *avenues*—ways of approach. *castle* is also a word used for the spider's web, a veritable citadel.

Line 19. *turnpikes*—defensive frame of pikes. *palisadoes*—fence of pales, *i.e.*, pointed pieces for fence. The outmost portions of the spider's web are described as defensive outworks of the spider's castle.

Lines 19—20. *the modern way of fortification*—the advocates of the Moderns claimed that in the art of fortification the Ancients had been excelled by them. In fact, this was one of the arts, upon the improvement of which the argument in favour of the Moderns was founded by their champions.

Line 23. *ports*—gates; openings. *to sally out*—to go forth for offence or defence.

Line 24. *mansion*—large residence; palace.

Line 25. *swallows*—could not swoop from above upon the spider's own body. Swallow is a bird that has given us the proverb 'One swallow does not make summer.'

Line 26. *brooms*—sweeping implements.

Line 28. *Pane*—sheet. A hole in the pane tempted the curious bee to enter.

Line 29. *expatiating*—wandering unrestrained.

Line 30. *to alight*—to settle.

Line 31. *unequal weight*—weight not equal to or the same as that of the spider's citadel; weight heavier than that of the spider's castle.

Line 32. *sunk down to the very foundation*—sank very low.

Line 34. *convulsion*—violent motion.

Line 35. *nature..................dissolution*—doomsday was imminent.

Line 36. *Beelzebub*—the Hebrew god of flies. *legions*—forces; swarms (of flies).

Line 37. *many thousands of his subject*—billions of flies (the subjects of Beelzebub) that the spider (his enemy) had destroyed and swallowed.

Lines 38—39. *valiantly resolved to issue forth*—took courage and determined to sally out. Note the mock-heroic phraseology.

his fate=whatever was in store for him at Beelzebub's hands.

Lines 39—10. *acquitted himself*—extricated or freed himself. *toils*—with a play on the two senses of the word, toils also meaning a net or a snare, here the spider's web.

posted—perched or seated. *securely*—all safe.

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Line 2. *the ragged remnants*—the torn, broken threads of the web, from which the bee had got his wings disengaged (freed).

Line 3. *adventured out*—sallied out ; come forth.

chasms—breaches ; deep fissures.

Line 4—*dilapidations*—disrepairs ; ruins ; destruction.

very near—almost.

at his wit's end—mad with rage.

Line 5. *stormed and swore*—raged and shouted ; fumed and fretted.

Line 7. *gathering causes from events*—putting two and two together, as we say in idiomatic English.

Line 8. *a plague split you*—a curse : may plague take or break you.

giddy—off your mental balance, mentally intoxicated, as you are.

Line 9. *a whore*—a prostitute ; a strumpet. *a giddy son of a whore*—invective of the extreme type. *for*—that you are.

with a vengeance—in a higher degree than was expected or desired.

Line 10. *litter*—untidy, disorderly heap of ruin. Reference

is to the damage, the destruction, the dilapidation the bee has done to the cobweb.

d—d—damned.

Line 11 *in the devil's name*—a form of swearing. *after your arse*—after the havoc wrought by your buttocks.

Line 13. *pruned*—cleared, removed 'the ragged remnants of the cobweb.'

Line 14. *disposed to droll*—inclined to speak in the jocose mood.

give you my hand and word—solemnly promise or assure.

Line 15. *Kennel*—mean, miserable dwelling.

in such a confounded pickle—in such a sorry plight ; in such a miserable trouble.

Line 16. *Sirrah*—Vocative replacing *sir* in imperious or contemptuous use

Line 18. *teach you better manners*—teach you (by punishing you) how to behave.

Line 20. *spend your substance*—exhaust all your venom.

Line 24. *your betters*—your superiors ; head and shoulders above you in respectability. In the time of Swift the plural form 'betters' was commonly used for a single person. Addison has in *The Spectator*, No. 266 : 'a squire or a gentleman, or one that was her betters.'

troth—faith ; word ; truth. *By my troth* is an oath=upon my word.

Line 25. *amount to a very good jest*—be the occasion or matter for a fine joke.

Line 23. *posture*—attitude of body or mind. *a disputant*—a debater. These lines are highly satirical of the methods and words of critics and controversialists.

Line 30. *scurrilous*—grossly or obscenely abusive.

Line 31. *opposite*—opponent The word is used in this sense in Shakespeare's *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, V. II. 62.

Line 32. *fully predetermined in his mind against all conviction*—strongly resolved beforehand not to give up his own

beliefs or to accept those of his opponent. The expression is highly satirical of the method and mood of all disputants who will die rather than renounce their convictions.

Line 33. *to disparage myself*—to lower myself; to speak slightingly of myself; not to bring discredit on myself.

Line 34. *rascal*—rogue; knave. *vagabond*—wanderer; vagrant; one having no hearth or home of his own.

Line 5. *stock*—(source of) family or breed. The spider charges the bee with not coming of a family of a metionable variety. *inheritance*—property, rank, title received by legal descent or succession.

Line 36. *a drone-pipe*—deep humming sound; fixed continuous note emitted by bass-pipe of bagpipe.

Line 37. *Your livelihood is an universal plunder upon Nature*—you make your living through an all-round loot of nature. *a freebooter*—piratical adventurer.

Line 39. *nettle*—species of genus of plants growing profusely on waste land and covered with stinging hairs.

violet—kind of plant with blue, purple, white or other flowers. That is, making no distinction between thorn and flower.

Line 40. *a native stock*—natural store ready for drawing on.

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Line 1. *my improvements in the mathematics*—my skill in or special mastery of mathematics.

The improvements in mathematical science were urged by those who championed modern learning for its excellence. It was claimed that the moderns had excelled the ancients in the subject of mathematics. This contention is set forth in chapter XIV of Wotton's *Reflections*. Improvements in fortification were thought to be a result of increased mathematical knowledge. In his *Ancient and Modern Learning*, however, Temple had cited ancient architecture as showing 'at what heights the mathematics were among the Ancients.' Swift's bee ranges over and to the east for gathering honey and wax, 'thus furnishing mankind with wo noblest of things, that is sweetness and light.' And Hindu

architecture as exhibited in South Indian temples is an eye-opener to the ablest of modern engineers ; Aldous Huxley even has bestowed high praise upon it.

Swift had a strong dislike for mathematics and missed no opportunity of deriding the pedantry of mathematicians.

Lines 10-11. *but whatever I collect......their smell or their taste*—The bee's answer somewhat resembles the following passage in Temple's essay *Of Poetry* : '(Bees) must range through fields, as well as gardens, chuse such flowers as they please, and by properties and scents they only know and distinguish ; they must work up their cells with admirable art, extract their honey with infinite labour and sever it from the wax, with such distinction and choice, as belongs to none but themselves to perform or to judge.' It is definitely in favour of the bee that it does no harm to blossoms and flowers, from which it gathers honey and wax. That is characteristic of the Ancients.

Line 14. *aught*—anything ; in any degree or respect.

Lines 15-16. *woeful*—sad. *by woeful experience for us both*—to the infinite regret of us both.

naught—worthless ; literally, nothing.

Line 17. *consider duration and matter as well as method and art*—in your buildings in future you must attach as much importance, if not more, to the durability and substantiality of your castle as to the sheer manner of skill in construction. As it is, the matter is naught.

Lines 18-24. *You boast indeed......a little foreign assistance.*

Explanation. This rather lengthy sentence occurs in the allegory of the spider and the bee—the most beautiful episode in *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift. It is an extract from the wonderful reply made by the bee to the spider's charge that he is a vagabond, a freebooter whose livelihood is a universal plunder whereas he himself depends upon himself for the material as well as improvements in the mathematics employed in the building up of his large castle.

After having shown how Providence has generously bestowed upon him his wings and his voice, *i.e.*, his flights and his music the bee turns his attention to the spider's vain claim for inde-

pendence and self-sufficiency. "You are proud," says he to the spider," that you depend upon nobody for all that you build and belongs to you. The meterial which has gone into the making of your palaces, you claim, is manufactured in your inside. The design, too, is your own. The mathematical improvements utilised are also your responsibility. But all this notwithstanding, the obvious truth is that you are very rich in filth and venom. At least that is what exudes from your body before it is used up in the construction of your web. For the quality of the liquor is judged by what comes out of the vessel. And your genius can be judged by what you have produced.

Far be it from me to deny that you possess ample store of both poison and dirt. All the same I may be permitted to remark that even for this store and its meagre increase you do depend upon an outside agency. Your original property in filth is augmented by dust and soot from below. And your possession in poison is added to by your slaughter of insects, each one of which supplies you with venom to destroy the next."

It will be seen that the reply of the bee is cogent, logical and substantial.

Line 29. *a lazy contemplation of four inches round*—a listless view of a small space round about. The spider does not see beyond its web : its vision, like that of the frog in the well, is limited and narrow.

Line 80. *an overweening pride*—inordinate conceit or arrogance. *engendering*—begetting ; producing.

Line 31. *excrement*—waste matter discharged from bowels. *venom*—poison.

Line 32. *flybane*—a sort of poison.

Lines 33-34. Each word used by the bee to describe its attributes is very well chosen and is simply apt. Not a phrase is superfluous.

Line 35. *dispute*—discussion ; argument. *eagerness*—keenness.

Clamour—loud appeal.

Line 36. *warmth*—enthusiasm ; heartiness.

Line 38. *issue*—result.

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Line 3. *emergency*—sudden juncture demanding immediate action or attention.

Lines 4-5. *He had been............the regent's humanity*—In the last paragraph of the Preface to his edition of letters of Phalaris Boyle had mentioned Bentley's lack of courtesy. Bentley referred to this passage in his *Dissertation* of 1697 rendering the allusion to his lack of courtesy as 'out of his singular humanity.' Boyle, in turn, adopted this translation, and spoke of Bentley's 'humanity' in his *Examination* of 1698.

regent—the Keeper of the Kings' Library, here.

Lines 5—7. *Who had tore off......a shelf of Moderns.* Bentley had denied the antiquity of Aesop, and the authenticity of the fables ascribed to him which he supposed to have been composed by Maximus Planudes.

Line 8. *like*—likely.

Line 9. *and turned himself to a thousand forms*—this is an allusion to Bentley's views on the genuineness of the fables attributed to Aesop.

Line 10. *in the borrowed shape of an ass*—"Bentley was supposed to have called Boyle an *ass*. So at least Boyle complained in his *Examination*, pp. 219, 220. But Bentley had only quoted 'the old Greek proverb that Leucon carries one thing, and his ass quite another' (*Dissertation* p. 74) ; and Boyle —'voluntarily', as Bentley said—had taken this to imply that 'the writer of the Greek Epistle means differently from the ass his editor.'......Accordingly Swift credits Bentley with a propensity to mistake asses for moderns—a happy stroke of satire as Bentley is himself a leader of the moderns."

Line 14. *with a world of pleasure*—most gladly. *a word of*—very great.

Line 15. *in the loudest key*—in the loudest tone.

Line 16. *so adapt*—so fit and suitable ; so adapted.

Lines 16—17. *that in the window*—the episode of the spider and the bee.

and this upon the shelves—the dispute between the ancient and the modern writers regarding their relative merits.

Line 20. *pro and con*—for and against.

Line 24 *fall plain.........the Moderns and us*—on all fours with the ancient-modern controversy.

Line 38. *entrails*—bowels ; intestines. *guts*—staying power.

Line 39. *edifice*—structure.

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Lines 7—15. *As for us the Ancients.........are sweetness and light.*

Explanation. Here is a fine peroration to the speech of Aesop summing up the case of the Ancients. The passage is one of the best in *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift.

Aesop has already compared the Moderns to the Spider of the allegory. The bee represents the Ancients. Like the bee the Ancients make no tall claims regarding the independence, originality and property. Like the bee they are gifted by Providence with two things only. The bee has wings and voice. The Ancients likewise have been divinely furnished with flights of ideas or imagination and charming expression in language. The bee has no fixed home of his own. He ranges from field to field, from garden to garden, and after infinite hard work collects honey and wax. The Ancients, in much the same way, have come hard by what they have achieved. By a universal range, with long search, hard work, much study, true judgment and distinction of things they have been able to give to making two noblest of things. In the case of the bee they are honey and wax—the two articles they store in their hives. In the case of the Ancients they are sweetness, *i.e.*, charm and fascination of expression, symbolized by honey—honey is sweet, as every one knows and will testify—and light, *i.e.*, mental illumination effected by clarity and loftiness of thought, as symbolized by wax which was used to make candlesticks and serve in place of the present-day electric bulbs. *Light* is the light of the Upnishadic verse—"From darkness lead me on *to light.*" Darkness is ignorance, *Light* is knowledge which ultimately

flowers forth in helpful wisdom. The Ancients of the West—the Greeks and the Romans—wandered to the East—light travels from the East—*i.e.*, the ancient Indian, Chinese and Egyptian civilisations to get light which they in turn gave to the West. These two—sweetness and light—are the priceless possessions of the Ancients. Dirt and poison belong to the Moderns.

The phrase 'sweetness and light' has been made familiar and famous in later times by its use by Matthew Arnold in his *Culture and Anarchy*. Sweetness and Light substitute, according to Arnold, the essence of culture It is a useless effort to trace to what extent Swift is original in the use of the expression. Suffice it is to say that Swift need not be supposed to have borrowed the phrase The idea, at any rate, is brilliant. The wording is beautiful. And nothing more is required to make an author sit among the immortals of humanity.

Pages 13—21

Pages 13—21 of the text describe the *third* and the *fourth* incidents of *The Battle of the Books*. The marshalling of the two hostile armies on the field of battle the description of the leaders on both sides, the engagement of the two battle-lines, and a number of duels between individual representatives of the ancients and the moderns go to comprise the third episode. In all the encounters, it deserves special mention, the ancients gain the upper hand. Excellently handled is the combat between Virgil and Dryden. The ancient appears in shining armour (it is gold in reality) and astride a spirited steed. The modern, a sorry, unknown figure, rides a sorrel gelding of a monstrous size, old and lean, whose ungainly trot causes a terrible clashing of the champion's armour. "The two cavaliers had now approached within the throw of a lance, when the stranger desired a parley, and lifting up the vizor of his helmet, a face hardly appeared from within which, after a pause, was known for that of the renowned Dryden." The artifice of suppense is employed by Swift to keep the reader long in the dark with regard to the identity of the great Virgil. The device is highly artistic. It is only after the *pee inside the hemlmet* pops out and is discovered to be Dryden's head that the reader heaves a sigh of relief and is pleasantly amused at what has happened.

The subject-matter of the *fourth* part of the main body of *The Battle of the Books* is the council of the gods convened by Jupiter in the Milky Way. The president of the deities informs them of the occasion for the conference. Momus the god of ridicule and patron of the Moderns, takes alarm at the imminent fate of his followers and rushes for counsel and assistance to the goddess Criticism. This deity, described in Swift's best manner :

"had claws like a cat : her head, and ears, and voice resembled those of an ass ; her teeth fallen out before ; her eyes turned inward, as if she look only upon herself : her diet was the overflowing of her own gall : her spleen was so large, as to stand prominent like a dug of the first rate, nor wanted excrescencies in form of teats, at which a crew of ugly monsters were sucking."

The picture is nauseating in the extreme. Nobody has excelled Swift in the art of creating disgust. The very look of Criticism is repulsive : one's gorge rises as it. Afraid above all for her son Wotton, she flies down to where the battle is in progress and, in her own way, cheers up her children, the Moderns. Under Jupiter's instructions the minor deities are also present watching and feebly directing the course of the battle in St. James's library.

EXPLANATIONS

Page 13

Line 16. *to conceive*—to form an idea of. *tumult*—commotion ; uproar ; noisy uprising of a multitude.

Line 17. *descant*—melodious speech or discourse.

Line 18. *animosities*—active enmities ; hostilities.

Line 21. *ensign*—banners ; flags.

Line 22. *cabals*—secret intrigues. *consults*—consultations.

Lines 24—26. *nothing less than.........this occasion.* Swift satirizes the lesser or inferior writers, *i.e.*, the moderns. They have personal ambitions and mutual jealousies. It is only the fear of the common enemy that keeps them united. Otherwise they would resort to intrigues and revolts.

the difference—dispute about the choice of a leader. *the horse*—the poets 'The epic poets were presented as full-armed horsemen ; the lyrical bards as light horse.'

Line 27. *private trooper*—private soldier in cavalry ; here, ordinary poet.

pretended to the chief command—laid claim to leadership.

Line 28. *Tasso : Torquato Tasso* (1544-1595), son of Bermardo Tasso (author of an epic), born at Bergame, spent many years at the court of Farrara, died at Rome Chief works are *Jerusalem Delivered*, an epic. *Renaldo* a pastoral, *Aminta*, and a tragedy, *Torrismondo*.

Milton—John Milton (1608—1674), the greatest poet (Shakespeare is in a class apart) of England, author of *Paradise Lost*, the greatest epic ever written in the English language. Milton is sublime. "His style was unconsciously sublime because he lived and thought consciously in a sublime atmosphere" He is mentioned here among the private troopers perhaps because as lyric poet he does not stand very high.

The light horse—the lyrical bards. *Cowley*—Abraham Cowley (1618—1667), a minor poet of the Puritan Age. He belongs to the Metaphysical School and exemplifies the vagaries of literary fortune. He blossomed young and at the age of twenty-five was proclaimed the greatest poet in England. But he is now forgotten and his name even is scarcely remembered. All the same his *Pindaric Odes* were considered a model in English poetry throughout the 18th century.

Despreaux—more commonly known by the name of Boileau, was one of the strongest supporters of the Ancients, and the chief antagonist of Perrault, the great champion of the Moderns in the controversy in France. 'Like Milton and Cowley he is here named, without satirical purpose, as a representative modern poet.'

Line 30. *the bowmen*—the philosophers, both physical and metaphysical, are thus named.

Descartes—see above. Descartes, Gassendi and Hobbes find mention together in *Wotton's Reflections*. Their views are widely different. They are here cited in a group as representative leaders in modern philosophy.

Gassendi—Pierre Gassendi (1592 – 1655), French mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, a friend of Galileo and Pascal, was an opponent of the philosophy of Aristotle, revived that of Epicurus and attempted to reconcile the theory of atoms with Christianity.

Lines 31—32. *Hobbes* : see above.

Whose strength was.........never to fall down again—satire on the unrealistic tendency, the idealism of philosophers as well as the myth of things, like elephants thrown up by Bhim in the *Mahabharat*, cast up in the sky and not having come down so far.

Line 33. *Like that of Evander*—a lapse of memory on the part of Swift. The author implies the arrow, not of Evander, but of Acestes. Refer to *Aeneid*, V.

Acestes—In Virgil's *Aeneid*, a Sicilian who shot an arrow with such swiftness that it caught fire from friction with air.

525—8. *meteors*—shooting stars.

Line 34. *Paracelsus brought...............of Rhaetia*—here is a reference to the chemical experiments of the Paracelsians, Paracelsus was a native of Switzerland and is presented as a man possessed from childhood with an aspiration to discover the secret of the world and a conviction that he was chosen to conquer that knowledge.

Line 35. *stink-pot-flingers—A stink-pot* is a receptacle containing something that has or emits strong offensive smell. *Flingers*—throwers ; casters. Reference is to the chemical experiments of the Paracelsians.

Rhaetia—in Switzerland. Paracelsus was a native of Switzerland.

Line 36. *a vast body of dragoons*—a large regiment of cavalrymen, formerly mounted infantry. Swift means by this class, *i.e., dragoons*, writers on medical subjects.

Line 37. *leading*—leadership.

Harvey—William Harvey (1578—1657), the celebrated discoverer of the circulation of the blood. Sir William Temple had cast doubt on the discovery in his *Ancient and Modern Learning* : "There is nothing new in astronomy to vie with the

ancients, unless it be the Copernean system ; nor in physic, unless Harvey's circulation of the blood. But whether either of these be modern discoveries, or derived from old fountains is disputed ; may, it is so too, whether they are true or not ; for though reason may seem to favour them more than the contrary opinions, yet sense can very hardly allow them ; and, to satisfy mankind, both these must concur. But if they are true, yet these two great discoveries have made no change in the conclusions of astronomy, nor in the practice of physic and so have been of little use to the world, though, perhaps, of much honour to the authors."

aga—commander ; chief officer.

Lines 37—38. *armed with scythes, the weapons of death*—note the pungent satire.

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Line 1. *report*—sound of explosion. Sir Thomas Browne speaks in *Vulgar Errors* of white powder which infallibly killed without report. "Of white powder and such as is discharged without report, there is no small noise in the world." Similarly John Cleveland writes :—

> ' For beauty, like white powder, makes no noise
> And yet the silent hypocrite destroys."

Lines 1—2. *heavy-armed foot, all mercenaries*—the historians.

Guicciardini—Francesco Guicciardini (1483—1540), a historian of Florence in Italy. 'Guicciardini' or 'Guicciardin' is the English form of the name. The Florentine historian's *Historia d' Italia* (1561) was translated into English by Fenton in 1579.

Davila—Enrico Caterino Davila (1576—1631), another Italian historian.

Line 3. *Polydore Virgil*—a historian (1470—1555), born in Italy, was sent by the Pope to England in 1501 as sub-collector of Peter's Pence, and naturalized as an Englishman in 1510.

Buchanan—George Buchanan (1506—82), the well-known Scottish humanist who won a European reputation for his

Latin plays and his skill in Latin verse. He is mentioned in this list because of his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582).

Mariana—Juan de Mariana (1537—1624), the greatest of Spanish historians, who wrote in Latin a History of Spain (1592), 'to let Europe know what Spain had accomplished.' He then rewrote the book in Spanish—*Historia de Espana* (1601).

Camden—William Camden (1551—1623), the English antiquary and historian.

Line 4. *The engineers*—the mathematicians.

regiomontanus—Johann Muller (1436—76), mathematician and astronomer. Regiomontanus is his Latin name, derived from his birth-place, Konigsberg.

Line 5. *Wilkins*—John Wilkins (1614—72), Bishop of Chester (1668), and one of the founders of the Royal Society during his tenure of the wardenship of Wadham College, Oxford. He is the author of *The Discovery of a World in the Moone ; or a Discourse tending to prove, that't is probable there may be another Habitable World in that Planet* (1638). In 1640 he added to this book a *Discourse concerning the Possibility of a Passage to the Moon* In 1668 he wrote *An Essay towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language*. Temple refers to both these books in slighting terms in his *Thoughts upon Reviewing the Essay of Ancient and Modern Learning.*

a confused multitude—riff raff, as one may say.

Scotus—see above.

Line 6. *Aquinas*—Thomas Aquinas (1225—1274), an Italian scholar who brought scholasticism to its highest development by harmonizing Aristotleanism with doctrines of the Church.

Bellarmine Roberto—Francesco Romolo Bellarmino (1542—1621), the famous defender of Roman Catholicism as against Protestantism. He is mentioned here with the two schoolmen as a representative theologian of the Catholic Church.

Line 8. *Swarms*—great numbers.

calones—the meanest of all slaves or servants. "By calling this disorderly rout *calones*," says Hawkesworth, "the author points both his satire and contempt against all sorts of mercenary

scribblers, who write as they are commanded by the leaders and patrons of sedition, faction, corruption, and every evil work: they are styled *calones* because they are the meanest and most despicable of all writers......" Another meaning given of *calones* is *pamphlets* which are not bound or covered.

a disorderly rout—confused crowd or multitude.

Line 9. *L'E strange*—Sir Roger L'Estrange was distinguished by his activity in this dirty warfare in the reigns of Charles II and James II.

ragamuffins—ragged dirty fellows; the tag-rag people.

Line 12. *Homer*—the blind poet of ancient Greece, author of the world-famous epics *The Ilaid* and *Odyssey*.

Pindar—the great Greek lyric poet (522—422 B.C.) was born at or near Thebes. He acquired fame at an early age and was employed by many winners of the games to celebrate their victories. Only complete poems of his are the triumphal odes.

Euclid—the celebrated geometrician, lived at Alexandria in the reign of the first Ptolemy (323—283 B.C.). It was he who told Ptolemy that there was no royal road to geometry.

Line 13. For *Plato* and *Aristotle*, see above.

Line 14. *Herodotus*—A Greek historian (480—425 B.C.). He is known as the father of History, for he was the first to collect his material systematically. His work, the first masterpiece of Greek prose, is divided into 9 books, each called after one of the Muses. The main theme of his work is enmity between Asia and Europe.

Livy: Titus Livs (52 B.C. to 17 A.D.), the Roman historian and friend of Emperor Augustus. His great work was History of Rome from the foundation of the city to death of Drusus (9 B.C.).

Hippocrates—the most celebrated physician of antiquity was a Greek. His dates are 460—357 B.C.

Line 15. *Vossius*—Gerrard John Vos or Vossius (1577—1649), or perhaps his son Isaac (1618—89), whose book *De Sibyllinis* fell into Swift's hands in the year 1698.

rear—hindermost part of army.

Line 16. *Fame*—personified ; defied, rather.

Line 17. *apartment*—room.

Line 18. *assigned*—alloted. *Jupiter*—king of gods in Roman mythology—corresponding to *Indra* of Hindu mythology and Jove of Greek mythology.

Line 21. *concern*—anxiety. *convokes*—calls together ; summons to assemble.

Line 22. *council*—conference or meeting of the gods.

the Milky Way—luminous ; band of countless stars encircling the heavens.

Lines 23—24. *just impendent*—imminent ; impending at the moment.

Line 26. *celestial*—heavenly ; or of the gods. Rather the gods are much interested in human affairs ; they would not be gods if they did not poke their nose in the matters of men.

Line 27. *Momus*—Greek god of ridicule. Momus is named as the presiding deity of the Moderns probably on account of the superiority claimed for them in works of humour. That is what Scott suggests. The greater probability, however, is that he is named as the typical carping critic, the direct ancestor of the modern critics.

Line 28. *Pallas*—another name of Athene, goddess of wisdom.

Line 29. *affections*—sympathies. *the book of fate*—the celestial record or register, from which one may learn or know what human beings or affairs are destined to. This book contains memoirs of all things past, present, and future.

Line 30. *Mercury*—the messenger (swift-footed) of the gods, Roman god of eloquence, skill, thieving etc.

Line 31. *in folio*—spoken of books printed on sheet of paper folded once ; largest-sized.

Line 33. *turkey leather*—hide treated with oil before the hair side is removed.

Line 34. *vellum*—fine parchment, originally from skin of calf.

Line 35. *decree*—divine judgment of the affair.

Line 36. *import*—meaning or sense.

Line 37. *without*—outside.

Line 38. *nimble*—agile ; swift ; quick in movement.

Line 39. *ministering instruments*—agents that help or serve Jupiter carry out his decrees or commands.

Page 15

Line 1. *a caravan*—a company travelling together for safety.

Line 2. *a link of galley-slaves*—a chain or line of drudges.

Line 14. *bore no very good face to*—did not augur well for.

Line 17. *Nova Zembla*—an Arctic land lying between Kara Sea and Barents, Sea, consisting of two large elongated isles with some small ones. The land is mountainous in the centre.

Line 18 *spoils*—ruins. *numberless volume half devoured*—numerous books maimed at mutilated by criticism.

Line 19. *Ignorance*—In his *Ancient and Modern Learning*—Temple speaks of 'sufficiency, the worst composition out of the pride and ignorance of mankind'. In that very essay again Temple says, 'his pride is greater than his ignorance ; and what he' wants in knowledge, he supplies by sufficiency.'

Line 22. *hoodwinked*—deceived ; blindfold. *Headstrong*—violently self-willed.

Line 23. *perpetually turning*—always changing. Opinion ever varies.

Line 24. *Impudence*—shameless forwardness ; insolent disrespectfulness.

Positiveness—assertiveness ; cocksureness ; confidence in opinion.

Line 25. *Pedantry*—parading or over-rating of book-learning or technical knowledge.

Lines 27—28. *her eyes turned inward, as if she look only upon herself*—If Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the inhabitants of Laputa have 'one of their eyes turned inward, and the other directly up to the zenith.'

Line 29. *gall*—secretion of liver ; something very bitter. A critic is ever annoyed and bitter.

Line 30—31. *a dug*—an udder. *of the first rate*—very large. *excrescencies*—morbid outgrowths. *teats*—mammary nipples through which milk passes. *a crew*—a whole set or group.

Lines 37—38. *Who then hereafter...........our divinities ?*—there will be none to worship us as deities.

Lines 39—40. *make factions*—create parties.

Page 16

Line 1—2. *having thus delivered himself*—having spoken thus. *stayed not for an answer*—did not wait to note the reaction or reply of Criticism. *Cf* the opening of Bacon's Essay *Of Truth*—'What is Truth, said jesting Pilate ; and would not stay for an answer.'

Line 4. *soliloquy*—speech addressed by a person to himself.

Line 6—7. *beaux*—fops.

schoolboys judges of philosophy—this sentence from Temple's *Ancient and Modern Learning* is relevant : 'A boy of fifteen is wiser than his father at forty, the nearest subject than his prince or governors ; and the modern scholars, because they have for a hundred years past learned their lesson pretty well, are much more knowing than the ancients their masters.' Criticism is responsible for all these anomalies and absurdities.

Line 7. *sophisters*—stu 'ents of varying seniority at some English and American universities. *conclude*—come to conclusions.

Lines 8—9. *instinct by me*—imbued, charged by me with the critical faculty.

Lines 11—12. *striplings*—lads, young men whose intellect is far from mature.

spend—waste extravagantly. *estate*—their worldly belongings.

Lines 12—14. *'Tis I.........in their stead*—Criticism holds sway over poetry now ; wit and knowledge have been displaced from that position by Criticism.

Line 18. *a hecatomb*—100 oxen ; great public sacrifice.

Line 19. *grateful smell*—sweet, pleasant fragrance.

Line 20. *her train*—her companions ; her retinue.

Line 24. *metropolis*—capital, *i.e.*, London.

Line 25. *seminaries of Gresham and Convent Garden*—We learn that the Royal Society held its meetings at this time in Gresham College. *Convent Garden* means here *the haunt of the wits*. Will's Coffee-house where wits met and conversed, discussed and debated was in Bow Street, Covent Garden.

Line 26. *at what time*—at which time.

Line 29. *now desert*—now empty or forsaken. *virtuosoes*—persons with special knowledge of or taste for works of art. 'Presumably they were fighting for the Moderns.'

Line 34. *a very short thread*—of life, that is, since he was to meet his death at the hands of Temple and Boyle.

Line 36. *this goddess*—*i.e.*, Criticism. This is indeed very hard on Wotton.

Page 17

Line 2—3. *She therefore gathered......an octavo compass*—It is worth remembering that Wotton's *Reflections* and Bentley's *Dissertations* were published in octavo. *Octavo* is size of book or page given by folding sheets into eight leaves each. *campass*—size.

Line 4. *arid*—dry.

Line 6. *decoction*—liquid prepared or manufactured.

Line 15. *onset*—attack ; assault.

Line 16. *full glutted*—full fed. *flung*—cast ; threw.

Line 21. *accoutred*—equipped.

Line 31. *adverse*—opposite.

Galen—Galenus Claudius (129—199 A.D.), a celebrated physician, born in Asia Minor and a friend of Marcus Aurelius, is said to have written about 500 treatises.

Line 33. *fold*—*i.e.*, of the shield.

N B—Here there is left a blank most probably because the author neither felt inclined nor qualified to discuss the relations between the different medical authorities of recent times.

Hic pauca desunt—*Hic* (here or in this place) *pauca* (a few words) *desunt* [(are) missing].

the wounded aga—the injured leading representative of the Moderns, *i e.*, Harvey. Swift did not think it proper to name Dr. Harvey's antagonist : he has, therefore, only intimated that he was wounded.

Desunt Nonnula—*Desunt* (lacking or wanting) *Nonnula* (in some respects). These Latin phrases are intended to announce or indicate gaps in the manuscript which, according to the Bookseller's notice to the Reader, was imperfect in several places 'by the injury of fortune on weather.'

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Line 1. *Aristotle*—see above.

Bacon—Francis Bacon (1561—1626), the greatest prose-writer of the Age of Elizabeth. He is also the father of the English Essay. A great philosopher, Bacon wrote *Advancement of Learning* in 1605. His greatest work, the *Novum Organum*, so named after Aristotle's famous *Organon*, was published in about 1620. Macaulay has called Bacon ' the great apostle of experimental philosophy". The student of Bacon cannot but become conscious of two things,—a perennial freshness, which one looks for in all literature that is to endure, and an intellectual power which marks him as one of the great minds of the world.

"The author, in naming Bacon, does a piece of justice to modern philosophy which Temple had omitted. 'I know of no new philosophers that have made entries on that noble stage for fifteen hundred years past, unless Descartes and Hobbes should pretend to it ; of whom I shall make no critique here, but only say, that by what appears of learned men's opinions in this age they have by no means eclipsed the lustre of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, or others of the ancients.'—*Essay on Ancient and Modern Learning*.—Neither Swift nor Temple mentioned the discoveries of Newton, though the *Principia* were published in 1657."—S.

Nichol Smith, however, is of a different view. "Temple," he writes, "had named Bacon as one of the greatest of the Moderns, *Ancient and Modern Learning* p. 61. It is noticeable that he is not wounded."

Line 2. *mien*—air, bearing, deportment, as indicative of character or mood.

Line 3 *missed*—failed to strike. *hizzing*—hissing ; making sharp spirant sound of *s*.

Line 4. *Descartes*—already annotated.

Line 8. *vortex*—whirlpool. This is an allusion to the absurd system of Descartes. Read the allusion to Descartes' theory of vortices in the *Tale*.

Line 12. *bore down all*—overthrew every one who came in his way.

Line 14. *Gondibert*—a heroic poem by Sir William Davenant in stanzas of four lines. Lavish praises were showered upon *Gondibert*. The poet's own preface made great claims for it. Then we have Hobbes' testimony : "I never yet saw Poem that had so much shape of Art, health of Morality, and vigour and beauty of Expression as this of yours." Temple's opinion was different, however : ".........If all this must be allowed, I will then yield *Gondibert* to have excelled Homer as it pre-ended."

Line 15. *Staid*—sedate ; of steady and sober character.

gelding—castrated horse, *i e.*, the one deprived of (usually male) generative power.

Line 16. *docility*—submissiveness.

Line 17. *alight*—get down. *Pallas*—another name for Athene, goddess of wisdom.

Line 18. *spoiled*—deprived by force or stealth ; robbed.

Line 22. *Denham*—Sir John Denham. This author's poems are very unequal. That is the allegorical interpretation of his lineage on the father's and mother's sides. Some peoms are very good. Others are just so so. His detractors went to the extent of asserting that he was not the author of *Cooper's Hill*.

Lines 24-25. *Apollo*—Greek sun-god ; also deity of music and poetry.

bit the earth—fell and died. *celestial*—heavenly. *a star*—something immortal.

Line 26. *terrestrial*—earthly. *wallowing*—weltering : rolling.

Line 27. *W-sl-y*—Samuel Wesley (1662—1735) contemptuously named Sam Westley, rector of Epworth, Lincolnshire. He was a collaborator of John Dunton, his brother-in-law in the *Athenian Mercury*. He wrote much poetry that is not even so much as remembered. He wrote the *Life of Christ* in verse. He is but a wretched scribbler.

Line 28 *Perrault*—a chief supporter of the moderns in France. *hurled*—threw.

Line 29. *Fontenelle*—another prominent supporter of the moderns in France.

Line 30. *Virgil*—already introduced to the reader.

Line 31. *completely fitted to his body*—sat well and tight on his body.

Line 32. *dapple-grey steed*—horse of grey colour with darker spots. *effect*—result.

Line 33. *mettle*—spirit ; courage ; natural ardour.

Page 19

Line 1. *sorrel*—of reddish-brown colour.

Line 4. *dregs of his strength*—whatever little remained of his strength.

Line 5. *trot*—steady pace faster than walk lifting each diagonal pair of legs alternately with brief intervals during which body is unsupported.

Line 8. *vizor*—visor ; movable part of helmet covering face.

parley—conference for debating of points in dispute.

Lines 9—10. Note the withering sarcasm of the sentence, contrasting the ungainly small face with the greatness of the name, which, again, is ironical.

Line 14. *the lady in a lobster*—name given by fisherfolk to a part of the stomach of the lobster. In *The Fairie Temple : or Oberon's Chappell* by Herrick we read :

> The Saint, to which the most he prayes
> And offers *Incense* Nights and dayes,
> The *Lady* of the *Lobster* is.

Line 15. *shrivelled*—shrunk into wrinkled or contorted state. *beau*—fop.

Line 16. *penthouse*—awning, canopy or the like. *periwig*—wig.

Lines 16-17. *the voice was.........and remote*—the voice was feeble as if coming from a distance, even as the face (visage) was small and shrivelled and 'situate far in the hinder part.'

Line 18. *harangue*—speech ; loud or vehement address. The reference is to the Dedication of the *Aeneis,* wherein Dryden makes no bones of saying, "I must acknowledge that *Virgil* in Latin, and Spencer in English, have been my Masters."

soothed up—humoured ; flattered.

Line 19. *a large deduction of genealogies*—a comprehensive deducing or inference from account of descent from ancestor by enumeration of intermediate persons ; a lengthy *Kalyan* (in Punjabi) recited by *mirasis* in undivided Punjab.

Line 22. *Diffidence*—is deified. Literally the word means excessive modesty or shyness.

Line 23. *his*—*i e.,* his armour.

Line 24. *beeves*—oxen, when the barter system was in vogue.

Alter Hiatus—*Alter* (another) *Hiatus* (gap or break).

Line 29. *Lucan*—Marcas Annaeus Lucanus (39—65 A.D.), a Roman poet born at Corduba in Spain. His success as a poet aroused the jealousy of Emperor Nero who forbade him to recite in public. In consequence Lucan joined in the compiracy of Piso and was compelled to take his own life. His chief work is *Pharsalia,* aheroic poem describing the struggle between Caesar and Pompey.

Line 30. *where he list*—wherever he liked.

Line 32. *Bl-ckm-re*—Sir Richard Blackmore (1650—1729), who composed long epics when free from his medical duties.

Line 33—34. *darted a javelin*—threw or cast a javelin. A *javelin* is a light spear.

Line 36. *Aesculapious*—Roman god of medicine. Blackmore was a physician.

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Line 1. *I perceive*—I understand ; I realise.

some god protects you—you are being defended and rescued by a god, *i e.*, Aesculapius, Roman god of medicine. Blackmore's skill as a physician atoned for his dullness as a poet.

Pauca desunt—Pauca (a few words) *desunt*—(missing or lacking).

Line 6. *Creech*—Thomas Creech (1659—1700), translator of Lucretius (1682), Horace (1684), and other classical authors. His Horace (dedicated to Dryden) did not succeed as well as his Lucretius which was highly praised.

Line 7. *Horace*—already touched upon.

Line 11. *Ogleby*—John Ogleby or Ogilby (1600-76), author and printer, published verse translations of Virgil, Homer and Aesope's *Fables*. The only good thing about these translations were their excellent printing and paper and illustrations.

Both Creech and Ogleby are translator-cousins.

Line 13 *Pindar*—the great Greek lyric poet (522-442 B.C.) who acquired fame at an early age. He was employed by many winners of the games to celebrate their victories. The only complete poems of his that are extant are 'Epinica' or triumphal odes. Pindar exercised great influence on Latin poetry. The English ode—a well-known class of it—is written in imitation of Pindar's odes.

Oldham—John Oldham (1653-83), satirist. He is mentioned here for his Pindarics.

Line 14. *Afra the Amazon*—Mrs. Aphra Behn (1640-89), novelist and dramatist, here mentioned, like Oldham, for her Pindarics. *Pindarics* mean Pindarics odes, metre, verses. As

a child she lived in Surinam Guiana. Returning to England in 1658, she married Behn, a city merchant. On the outbreak of the Dutch War she was employed by Charles II as a spy in Antwerp. Between 1671 and 1689 she produced 15 plays, of which the most popular was 'The Rover" dealing with the amorous adventures in Naples and Madrid of a band of English cavaliers during the exile of Charles II. She also wrote poems and novels. On her death in 1689 she was buried in the east cloister of Westminster Abbey. Amazons are a fabulous race of female warriors in Scythia. The term is used with Afra's name as she is presented as a female warrior in the *Battle. Light of foot* refers to her lyrics.

Line 15. *Wheeling with incredible agility*—turning or facing round or sideways with unbelievable nimbleness. The reference is to the complicated structure of Pindar's *Odes*.

Line 17. *Cowbley*—already annotated.

Line 25. *as cavaliers are in our degenerate days*—a satiric comment on the poor quality of the poets of Swift's days. In *The Dunciad* Pope speaks of

"Twelve starv'ling bards of these degen'rate days."

Line 28. *present death*—immediate death.

Line 29. *Venus*—goddess of love and beauty in Roman mythology. The allusion is to Cowley's *The Mistress*, a collection of love verses.

Line 34. *a suppliant*—a humble petitioner.

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Line 1. *ransom*—sum of money or value paid for release of prisoner of war.

Line 2. *carcass*—dead body (used of human body with contempt).

Line 4. *cleft*—cut.

Line 5. *in twain*—in two.

Line 8. *This Venus took*—The author's judgment has been questioned by critics who think that Cowley's *Pindarics* are very much superior to his *Mistress*.

ambrosia—food, here drink, of the gods ; the Hindu *Amrit.*

Line 9. *sprig*—small branch ; shoot. *amarnth*—divine plant bearing imaginary unfading flower. It is mentioned in Tennyson's *Lotus-Eaters.*

Line 12 *a dove*—dove is the bird sacred to Venus : her chariot is drawn by a pair of doves. *harnessed it*—yoked it.

Hiatus valde de flendus—*Hiatus* (gap or break) *valde* (much; very much ; exceeding ; greatly) *flendus* (lamentable or regrettable).

MS.—manuscript.

Pages 21—26

We come to the concluding incident of *The Battle of the Books.* It may be described as the fifth and last part of Swift's satire. The author himself has named it "The Episode of B-nt-l-y and W-tt-n." Hawkesworth has a fine note on it. "As the account of the Battle of the Books," he says," is an allegorical representation of *Sir William Temple's* essay, in which the ancients are opposed to the moderns, the account of *Bentley* and *Wotton* is called an episode and their intrusion represented as an under action."

In fact this is the episode to which all the foregoing account has been leading. It details the main purpose of Swit's satire. As far as the description of the Battle of the Books is concerned, this of the encounters of Wotton and Bentley on the one hand and Temple and Boyle on the other is best done. The account of the engagement of Virgil and Dryden is also brilliantly handled but it pales into insignificance by the side of the episode of Bentley and Wotton. And justifiably too.

For of the two immediate causes or purposes of *The Battle of the Books* this one is far and away the more potent and relevant. Dryden, no doubt, had deeply offended Swift by running down his poetic talent. His 'Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet' had gone into the latter's heart like a stab. Swift never forgave Dryden for the comment upon his odes. In the *Battle,* as at various other places, Swift takes his revenge. Therefore there is greater sincerity and consequent force in the satire in the Virgil-Dryden engagement. But by and large the more power-

ful purpose of the *Battle* was to come to the aid of his master in the ancient-modern controversy. Wotton and Bentley had committed an unpardonable offence. They had challenged the literary taste of Sir William Temple, one of the most cultured men living: they had called in question his scholarship. Wotton through his *Reflections* and Bentley through his *Dissertations* had offered an inexcusable insult to Temple. Therefore they must be taught the lesson of their life. Swift did teach them that lesson in *The Battle of the Books*. That is what he has been converging on and leading to in his satire from the very beginning, in the middle and towards penultimate end. It is on that account that the description of the adventures, experiences, and final rout of Bentley and Wotton is most sincerely, most forcefully and most brilliantly tackled. Swift's satirical talent, intellectual faculty and literary gifts show themselves here at their best. Classic similes ooze out of his pen. Words and phrases are most appropriately and most economically and most effectively used. The lash falls so heavy and painful that the two moderns shrink and shrivel and contract and contort under it till they are reduced from men to mice.

Narrated in the mock-heroic style, the concluding adventures of Bentley and Wotton on the field of battle are but an allegorical representation of their attack on Temple and their final rout at the hands of Boyle. With a bold front the two criticism-cousins march forth on the battlefield to assault whatever foe comes their way, 'resolving by policy or surprise, to attempt some neglected quarter of the ancients' army'. In a simile that might well adorn the pages of some book of classic excellence, Swift thus portrays them together :—

"As when two mongrel curs, whom native greediness and domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds of some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow ; meanwhile, the conscious moon, nor in her zenith, on their guilty heads darts perpendicular rays ; now dare they bark, though much provoked at her refulgent visage, whether seen in puddle by reflection, or in sphere direct ; but one surveys the region round, while t' other scouts the plain......so marched this lovely, loving pair of friends,......"

Marching thus forth with raiding intentions they come upon the sleeping forms of Phalaris and Aesop. A goddess saves the ancients from great harm than the mere stealth of their armour. After that Wotton and Bentley sight Temple and Boyle by the fountain of Helicon where, having no idea of the impending danger, the two allies are drinking deep 'of the Pierian spring.' Wotton flings his lance at Temple who remains unharmed. At this Charles Boyle gives a hot chase to the two marauders, darts a 'lance of wondrous length and sharpness,' and transfixes both. The scene is depicted in another epic simile which is too beautiful not to be quoted in full :—

"As when a skilful cook has trussed a brace of woodcocks, he, with iron skewer, pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs ; so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, joined in their lives, joined in their deaths, so closely joined that Charon would mistake them both for one and waft them over Styx for half his fare. Farewell, beloved loving pair ! Few equals have you left behind : and happy and immortal shall you be, if all my wit and eloquence can make you."

And that is how this mock-heroic epic of *The Battle of the Books* comes to an end.

EXPLANATIONS

Page 21

Line 14. *half inclining to a retreat*—half tending to withdraw from the field of battle. *Issued forth*—came out of ; marched forth.

Line 17 *without shape or comeliness*—personal appearance quite the opposite of pleasant.

Lines 18—19. *His armour was patched up of a thousand incoherent pieces*—metaphorically or allegorically the sentence means that Bentley's writings abounded in quotations, and extracts from the Greek poets. His composition was a veritable patch-work. "Bentley's critics," says Nichol Smith, 'sneered at his numerous quotations (which they said he got from Lexicons) and at his studies of the fragment of the Greek poets. See the *Tale of a Tub*, p. 145, note 1 ...... *Cf*. also *The Dunciad*. IV, lines 228—30 :

In poach in Suidas for unlicens'd Greek.
In ancient sense if any needs will deal,
Be sure I give them fragments not a meal."

incoherent—rambling ; inconsistent.

Line 21. *Etesian*—is derived from a foreign word which means *a year*. *Etesian wind* was a name given to the north-west wind which blows in the Mediterranean every summer ; hence a gale that recurs regularly. Wotton uses the word twice in his *Reflections* (1697).

Line 22. *steeple*—lofty structure, epecially tower surmounted with spire, rising above roof of church.

Lines 24—25. *tainted*—corrupted or decayed. *nor wanted gall from the same fountain*—*i.e.*, gall also issued forth from or came out of his mouth (fountain) along with his breath.

Line 26. *atramentous*—black like ink ; ink-like : adjective from *atrament*, ink, blacking, or a similar liquid or substance. *quality*—here commodity or liquid.

Line 28. *flail*—wooden staff at end of which a short heavy stick hangs swinging.

Line 29. *ordure*—dung ; excrement ; hence obscenity or foul language. Bentley was known (if not a notorious) for letting the filth fly at all without distinction, *i.e.*, for using foul scurrilities against everybody.

Line 31. *a consult*—a consultation. *sum*—substance ; the final upshot.

Line 35. *his talent of railing*—his special ability to employ abusive language, *i.e.*, to censure or satirise.

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Line 4. *at this juncture*—at this particular state of affairs ; at this time.

Line 5. *prevail*—have the upper hand.

Line 8—10. *they were all.........and nonsensical scoundrels*—This speech is nothing but a satire on Bentley's 'low and mean' style in controversy. It explains the metaphorical meaning of 'a vessel full of ordure which Bentley is pictured as

carrying in his left hand. In discussion Bentley is downright abusive and scurrilous.

a pack—a group. *d-d*—damned; an imprecation. *confounded loggerheads*—idiotic fools; utter blockheads. *whelps*—ill-bred fellows; literally, young dogs.

Line 1[illegible]. *Scaliger*—'probably Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609), rather than his father Julius Caesar Scaliger, who is referred to in the *Tale*, page 203. The younger scholar's methods in controversy were condemned in Boyle's (*Examination* p. 225); and Bentley replied in the Preface to his *Dissertation*, (1699). *The Battle*—was probably written before the *Dissertation*; but Scaliger's attack here on Bentley is all the more effective in view of Bentley's defence of Scaliger against Boyle.'

Miscreant—vile; depraved; wretched.

Line 19. *prater*—blabber; chatterer; one who talks too much.

Line 22. *humanity*—classical literature.

Line 23. *converse*—association. *grovelling*—abject; low; base. *miry*—vile; literally, muddy.

Line 24. *render thee*—make you. *untractable*—unmanageable.

Line 26. *finished thee*—perfected you as; fashioned you into. *pedant*—one who pretends or shows off as learned.

Line 27. *never despond*—don't lose hope.

Line 31. *choked*—stifled; rendered speechless. *spleen*—ill temper; spite.

Line 33—34. *With him......beloved Wotton*—Bentley's first *Dissertation* was published in 1697 as an appendix to the second edition of Wotton's *Reflections*.

Line 38. *Aldrovandus*—Ulissse Aldrovandi (1522—1605) of Bologna. He compiled numerous monumental folio volumes on natural history. The *tomb* signifies, presumably, the work on which he spent his life and eyesight.

Line 39. *declining sun*—setting sun.

Line 40. *out-guards*—body of soldiers serving as protectors of place.

haply—by chance ; perhaps.

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Lines 1—2. *spy*—discern ; make out, especially by careful observation. *straggling sleepers*—enemy soldiers or fighters who, strayed from the main body, have gone asleep.

Line 3. *mongrel curs*—dogs of no definable breed, or of mixed origin. A *cur* is a worthless, low-bred, or snappish dog. *native*—natural.

Line 4. *provoke*—incite ; instigate ; tempt ; allure. *nightly*—every night, or at night.

Line 5. *folds* enclosures for sheep. *grazier*—person who feeds or grazes (verb from grass) cattle (sheep including) for market.

Line 6. *lolling*—hanging out.

Line 7. *zenith*—a highest point ; time or place of greatest glory or power ; *i.e.*, moon when full.

Line 9. *refulgent*—shining ; gloriously bright. *visage*—face ; countenance. *puddle*—small dirty pool, especially of rain-water on road.

Line 10. *in sphere direct*—straight at the orb (of the moon). *Surveys*—lets the eye pass over, takes general view of forms general idea of arrangement and chief features of.

Line 11. *scouts the plain*—goes or ranges over the field to seek information (particularly military).

Line 12. *the refuge*—what is rejected or left behind as worthless ; what is left over after use (here, meal).

Line 13. *gorged*—satiated ; filled full. *ominous*—inauspicious ; foreshadowing disaster—*raven*—large black-plumaged hoarse-voiced bird of crow kind feeding chiefly on flesh, often kept tame, and popularly held of evil omen. *lovely*—used ironically.

Line 14. *circumspection*—wariness ; cautiousness.

Line 17. *profound*—deep.

Lines 2—17. *As when two mongrel curs...........far off in a profound sleep.*

Explanation : This extract is from *The Battle of the Books*, particularly the concluding part where the Bentley-Wotton ventures and fate are penned in words. It is from that part of the account where Bentley and Wotton march forth together at the fag end of the battle between the ancients and the moderns, *i e.*, the books written by classical writers and those scribbled by present-day authors.

Swift rarely resorts to the use of the simile. But when he wields this linguistic weapon, he does it with force, gusto and enthusiasm. Then his similes are telling, terrible and tremendous The description of the encounters between Bentley and Wotton on the one side and Temple and Boyle on the other is enriched by at least three typically Swiftean similes. The lines under reference and explanation contain the lengthiest of these similes.

A powerful picture is created out of words and phrases simple to look at but tremendously forceful in effect. The time is of night. The full moon is at the highest point in the sky. Its rays fall on two animals of the commonest as also of the lowest breed. They are two mongrel curs—dirty and mean and shabby because of a mixed race. Domestic necessity and native voraciousness have brought them together. Timid and easily alarmed they are out looking for sheep (with a view to preying upon them) belonging to some wealthy owner. Moving slowly and stealthily they lock their lowered or drooping tails in between their buttocks and hang out their hungry and tremulous tongues. The bright shine of the moon, beheld by them either with a gaze straight at the heavenly orb or through reflection from a small pool of miry rain-water, is inciting enough but fails to evoke even a shred of their usual cry because of fear and timorousness. One of these animals simply casts a look at the region round with the object of exercising the eye on whatever stragglers or stray objects might be discerned. The other ranges over the entire plain in order to see if any mutila-

ted, maimed, half-devoured carcass might be found from whatever is left over by satiated, full-fed wolves or ravens associated in popular imagination with evils impending. This, exactly, was the picture of the two leaders of the moderns, Bentley and Wotton, marching forth together and forming an affectionate couple of ungainly companions. The utmost they looked for, because they were extremely cowardly and walked with the maximum possible wariness, was a brace of glittering armour hanging on some neighbouring tree, the owners napping at a safe distance. For the best they were capable of was the act of pilfering the suits of armour, mightily afraid of encountering the masters thereof.

How dreadful! The flail of Jonathan Swift falls heavy and smashing. Wotton and Bentley are presented in the worst, most repulsive of lights and as two creatures most vile, most ugly and most disgusting.

Critics are usually of that type. Their original intellectuality is nil. They are ever on the look-out for the refuse of mighty minds Their time—*i.e.*, time for their activity—is that of night: they are awake only when human intelligence of the right brand sleeps. Their lack of courage symbolizes their inability to stand up, *i e.* on their own merits. The moon of ancient scholarship shines bright at the time of intellectual darkness. Obliquely or directly they look at it, but do not have the guts to utter their low, moaning cry that is their usual practice Their lolling tongues represented their voracious appetite for the crumbs of rich intellectual repasts. Their depressed tails signify the timorousness that fights shy of the exposure of cracks in their nature of mental constitution. Their most ambitious achievement in writing is the stealth of the outer garments of the classics in the moment of the latter's unguardedness.

Line 17. *drew lots*—tried to secure by chance decision what they were to perform separately.

Line 18. *adventure*—that of the stealth of two shining suits of armour.

fell to Bentley—turned out or was decided to be the lot of Bentley.

Lines 19—20. *in his van Confusion and Amaze*—amaze-

ment and confusion walked in front of him. *Horror and Affright brought up the rear*—fear and terror followed, *i.e.* moved behind him.

Line 22. *fain*—gladly. *dispatched them*—killed them; given them the death-blow. *stealing close*—moving stealthily near.

Line 24. *interposing*—coming in between. *icy*—cold. Fear gripped Bentley : he had not the courage to strike, so benumbed he became.

Lines 25—26. *dormant*—sleeping. *heroes*—Phalaris and Aesop. *to turn at the same instant*—this turning gave Bentley the impression that they were waking. That is the metaphorical meaning of 'the goddess Affright interposing.'

Line 27. *For Phalaris was just............* 'This is according to Homer, who tells the dreams of those who were killed in their sleep.'

Line 28. *vile*—wretched ; mean ; worthless. *poetaster*—paltry, tenth-rate poet. *lampooned*—written about him a lampoon, a virulent or scurrilous piece of satire.

Line 29. *How he had got him roaring in his bull*—Reference is to the brazen bull in which the victims of Phalaris the tyrant were roasted. 'A representation of the grim ceremony forms the frontispiece to Boyle's edition of the Epistles of Phalaris.'

"Boyle concluded his *Examination* with a reference to Bentley and the Bull : 'Many of Phalaris's enemies......repented of their vain confidence afterwards in his *Bull*. Dr. *Bentley* is perhaps by this time, or will suddenly be satisfied, that he also has presum'd a little too much upon his distance ; but it will be too late to repent, when he begins to bellow.' To this Bentley replied with happy ease, *Dissertation* (1699), pp. xl. iii.

In a Cambridge caricature Bentley was represented as saying 'I had rather be *roasted* than Boyled'.

Line 31. *a wild ass*—*i.e.* Bentley.

Line 32. *dunging*—discharging or dropping excrement.

Line 34. *quest*—search. *darling*—best loved or dearest person ; here, his friend and favourite Wotton.

Line 35. *He—i.e.* Wotton.

Line 37. *issued from*—sprang or flowed forth from. *hard by*—near ; close at hand.

Line 38. *mortal*—liable to die. *Helicon*—Boeotian mountain, sacred to Muses ; source of poetic inspiration. *parched*—made or rendered hot and dry.

Line 39. *to allay it*—to quench his thirst. *limpid*—clear ; pellucid. *stream*—the small rivulet that issued from Helicon.

Line 40. *profane*—unholy ; irreverent ; impious. *essayed*—tried.

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Line 1. *stooped*—bent low.

Lines 2—3. *prone*—having the front or ventral part downwards ; lying face downwards. *ere*—before. *kissed*—so much as touched with lips. *liquid crystal*—clear, transparent water of the fountain. *Apollo*—god of music and poetry. *channel*—the bed of running water.

N.B The idea implied in these sentences is that in spite of his best and repeated efforts Wotton failed to gather the inspiration that ought to belong to a genuine man of letters. In other words, Wotton is made out to be a third-rate writer.

Line 7. *sediment*—lees ; dregs ; matter that settles to bottom of liquid. *slime*—fine oozy mud or other substance of similar consistence.

Line 9. *unhallowed*—profance ; unholy ; impious.

Lines 5—10. *For although no fountain............too deep or far from the spring.*

Explanation : This sentence occurs in the concluding episode of *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift. Wotton, separated from Bentley, had wandered long in search of some enterprise on the field of battle between the ancients and the moderns, till at length he arrived at a small rivulet that issued from the fountain Helicon. Here he made numerous efforts to drink of the fountain of the Muses but in vain. When he stooped prone to drink,

Appollo intervened with his shield. The result was that Wotton drew up nothing but mud.

In the lines set for explanation the author says that in spite of the renowned purity of Helicon water at the bottom there is a thick layer of slime and mud. This sediment is there in consequence of a boon asked of Jupiter, by Apollo, the god of music and poetry, and granted by the chief of the deities. There was a distinct purpose behind this boon. There are poeple, like Bentley and Wotton, who with motives of malice and out of impurity of mind and malignity of heart, endeavour to derive inspiration from Helicon to be able to write scurrilous and vituperative pieces. They draw only mud. The sediment of slime, therefore, is a sort of punishment for such drawers. At the same time the presence of the layer of fine oozy mud at the bottom of Helicon is a warning to those writers who make exhorbitant demands on the liquid crystal of Helicon. In case they draw deep or far from the fountain they will come upon the sediment of slime. In other words having overtaxed and exhausted their best talent they will decline in quality of their work and give but a poor account of themselves as such.

Line 11. *fountain-head*—original source. *discerned*—perceived ; saw.

Line 12. *the one he could not distinguish*—reference to the obscurity of Boyle as also to the fact of the multiplicity of the authorship of Boyle's edition of the Epistles of Phalaris.

Line 13. *Temple*—Sir William Temple, the distinguished statesman and diplomatist, master and relative of Jonathan Swift, who had imported the ancient-modern controversy into England from France. He had very much supported the side of the ancients. Therefore, he is here described as 'General of the Allies to the Ancients' *allies*—helpers ; friends ; therefore supporters.

Line 14. *back was turned*—he was unaware of the evil intentions of Wotton.

large draughts—big amounts taken at single acts of drinking. The implication is that Temple was a writer of genuine merit and high inspiration.

Line 17. *quaking*—trembling, shivering because of fear.

Line 19. *what renown should I purchase among the chiefs*—I shall win very great credit and fame among the generals of the army of the moderns.

Line 20. *issue out against him*—march forth to give the fight to him (*i.e.*, Temple).

Lines 21—22. *What Modern of us dare?*—none, not even the most valiant, of the moderns has the guts to challenge him to a fight. *fights like a god*—his prowess in battle is far above that of the bravest of mortals : figuratively, the phrase means that Temple is most learned and cultured, his scholarship is without parallel. *Pallas*—another name of *Athene*, the goddess of wisdom. The sense is that Temple is a divinely inpired writer. *at his elbow*—by his side, to help and support him.

Line 23. *mother*—the goddess Criticism. Wotton is her darling child.

Line 23. *Fame*—the goddess of public report, rumour.

Line 24. *so great a goddess*—the goddess Criticism.

grant me—enable me ; confer on me the strength requisite.

Line 25. *his spoils*—plunder (armour etc.) taken from him (*i.e.*, Temple) in war.

Lines 26—27. *The first part of his prayer*—*i.e.*, hitting Temple with his lance. *intercession*—interceding ; pleading ; inter-posing.

Line 28. *his mother*—Criticism. *Momus*—god of ridicule and patron of the moderns. It was Momus who had carried the news of the impending battle to Criticism. *the rest*—*i.e.*, of his prayer, see above. *perverse*—perverted ; from what is required or asked for ; hence, wicked.

Line 29. *Fate*—Destiny. *was scattered in the air*—was cast to the four winds, as the idiom runs. Wotton's *Reflections* appeared, and thus the first part of his prayer was granted. But the rest of the prayer was not answered, as the publication did Temple no harm.

Line 30. *brandishing it*—flourishing it. *thrice*—*three* is a magical number among most nations of the world.

Line 31. *with all his might*—with all the strength he possessed ; as forcefully as he could.

Lines 33—34. *averted*—turned away ; with his back towards the thrower of the lance. *Ancient*—Temple is not actually an Ancient. He is only the chief supporter of the Ancients, the 'General of the Allies of the Ancients.' *upon which*—*i.e*,, on the belt. *lightly grazing*—just touching in passing.

Lines 34—35. *Temple neither felt the weapon touch him, nor heard it fall* This is a little beside the truth. In fact, Temple was annoyed by Wotton's attack. Though Swift represents Temple here as completely indifferent to the attack, Swift did the duty of publishing Temple's defence of his part in the controversy —*some thoughts upon Reviewing the Essay of Ancient and Modern Learning.*

Line 36. *having remitted*—having delivered or darted.

Line 37. *unrevenged*—going scot free ; escaping unpunished.

Lines 38—39. *enraged*—angry ; indignant. *flung*—thrown ; darted.

so foul a goddess—so vile or wicked a deity as Criticism.

pollute—corrupt ; spoil ; render unholy.

his fountain—Helicon is Apollo's fountain, for it is sacred to the Muses.

put on the shape of—assume the form of gods, in all mythologies, are described as possessing the power of putting on shape they like or think necessary.

Atterbury, who assisted Boyle in the preparation of the *Examinatoin.*

Line 40. Apollo put it into the head of the Honourable Charles Boyle, who was then under-graduate at Christ Church, that he should go to the rescue of Sir William Temple. Boyle readily agreed or obeyed *to accompvny Temple*, *i.e.*, to take up his side and wrote his *Examination* in support of the cause Temple had championed

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distant Modern—Wotton who was standing at a distance.

flung—threw ; darted ; cast.

to take immediate revenge—In the preface to his *Examination* Boyle said that his principal reason for entering into the controversy about Phalaris was his respect for Sir William Temple, 'upon whom I so unhappily occasion'd this storm of criticism to fall.' Speaking of himself as 'a young writer', he alleged that Temple had been coarsely treated by Bentley.

clad—clothed ; equipped. *a suit of armour* signifies the substantial stuff that the elders of Christ Church had given Boyle for bringing out his contribution to the controversy.

all the gods are the Christ-Church wits who had ably assisted Boyle in the dispute. Says Hawkesworth, "Boyle was assisted in this dispute by Dean *Aldrich*, Doctor *Atterbury*, and other persons at *Oxford*, celebrated for their genius and their learning, then called the Christ-Church wits." Atterbury himself tells us in one of his letters to Charles Boyle that 'in laying the design of the book, in writing above half it, in reviewing a good part of the rest, in transcribing the whole, and attending the press, half a year of my life went away.'

fled before him—took to his heels in front of him.

Libyan plains—plains of Libya in Africa, overgrown with forests.

Araby desert, the famous desert of Arabia.

aged sire—old male parent.

prey—*shikar*—animal hunted or killed by carnivorous animal for food.

scours along—roves or ranges abroad, especially in search or pursuit.

chance—by chance.

brayings importune—importunate brayings.

brayings are asinine sounds or cries. *importunate*—persistent, pressing in solicitation.

affronts—openly insults or offends.

loathing—hating ; despising.

distain—discolour ; soil ; make foul.

vile—mean ; of a poor quality.

Echo is personified as a *nymph.* Echo is repetition of sound by reflexion of sound-waves ; resound. *nymph*—one of class of mythological semi-divine maidens inhabiting sea rivers, fountains, hills, woods, or trees, or attending superior deities. Sound is echoed loudly from deep wells or high hills.

her ill-judging sex—i.e., the female sex that is not credited, particularly by Swift, with sound or correct judgment.

with more delight—with greater gusto.

Philomela's song—the song of the nightingale. How Philomela came to be another name for the nightingale is a story from mythology. Philomela was a daughter of Pandion, King of Athens Her sister Procne having married Tereus, King of Thrace, pined for the company of Philomela. Tereus obtained Pandion's permission to conduct Philomela to her sister. On the way Tereus became enamoured of Philomela and after having offered violence to her cut off her tongue so that she might not be able to discover his ill usage to her sister, and hid her in a lonely place. He then told Procne that Philomela was dead. Procne somehow came to know about it and in order to take revenge on Tereus killed her son and served the flesh to him. On learning that he had been made to eat the flesh of his own son, Tereus drew his sword to kill both sisters. The gods, however, changed him into a hoopoe, Philomela into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow. Since then the nightingale is also named Philomela or Philomel.

vindicates the honour of the forest—rights the wrong done to the wood by the importunate brayings of the wild ass.

Lines 5—16. *As a young lion in the Libyan plains.........So Wotton fled so, Boyle pursued.*

Explanation. Just imagine the desert of Arabia or the plains of Libya. Imagine further that a young lion-cub roves along in obedience to the commands of his male parent who has sent him forth to hunt some animal for food or merely for taking an airing or improving his health. Instead, by sheer chance, the

young lion comes upon a wild ass who offends his ear and does dishonour to the atmosphere by his rude unpleasant cries. Now the lion is unwilling to stoop so low as to kill such wretched game and soil or spoil his claws with his vile blood. But he is enraged at the offensive asinine sounds rendered loud and unbearable a hundredfold by being echoed back from the neighbouring objects. Swift allegorically represents this fact by personifying Echo as a nymph who, in the usual foolish, judgment-lacking manner of the female sex, imparts momentum to the noisy brayings of the ass with greater gusto than she would to the charming song of a nightingale. Therefore to right the wrong done to the forest-atmosphere the lion undertakes to give the chase to the wild ass.

The application of this epic simile employed in the concluding episode of *The Battle of the Books* by Jonathan Swift is somewhat like this. The intellectual atmosphere of England has been rendered foul and vile by the pamphlets of Wotton bearing on the ancient-modern controversy. These writings—scurrilous and critical—are likened to the importunate brayings of the wild ass who is Wotton himself. The Honourable Charles Boyle is compared to the young lion His intellect is worthy of bigger and more venerable game. In other words it deserves to be employed in brighter, more lustrous compositions. But, as ill luck would have it, Boyle comes face to face with the wild ass Wotton whose brayings have attracted wide publicity. The latter's scurrility and vituperation have been repeated by some others. Simply to purify the intellectual and literary atmosphere, therefore, Boyle has agreed to pay Wotton back. His *Examinations* are a counter-blast to Wotton's *Reflections*. "So W-tt-n fled, so Boyle pursued."

slack—slow down. *his course*—his pace, *i.e.*, in composition; his wit had outlived itself.

lover—friend.

the spoils of the two sleeping Ancients—the stolen armour of Aesop and Phalaris.

both which he had lately with his own hands new polished and gilded—the reference is to Boyle's edition of the Epistles of Phalaris, which appeared in 1695.

Rage sparkled in his eyes—Boyle's eyes glowed, rather burnt, with anger and indignation.

the new approacher—i.e., Bentley.

fain would he be revenged on both—Boyle would be glad to punish both Wotton and Bentley.

fled different ways—ran away in different directions.

gets a painful livelihood by spinning—earns just enough to keep her body and soul together by plying her spinning wheel.

common—land belonging to a community, especially unenclosed waste land.

courses round—pursues, runs after the geese.

stragglers—the dispersed geese ; geese that fail to remain compact.

cackle—make clucking noise. *champaign*—(expanse of) open country.

Lines 23—29 *Fain would he be revenged............So Boyle pursued, so fled this pair of friends.*

Explanation The concluding portion of Swift's *Battle*, the one that comprises an account of the encounters between Temple and Boyle on one side and Bentley and Wotton on the other, is simply rich in similes of the epic variety. They add force and significance and charm to the ideas which Swift wants to impart. Here in the lines under explanation we come across one of these classic comparisons.

Boyle has been giving the chase to Wotton on the field of Battle when Bentley appears with the stolen helmet and shield of Phalaris. The sight kindles the anger of Boyle. Gladly would Boyle inflict punishment, by way of revenge, on both Wotton and Bentley. What renders his position rather difficult is that the latter run in different directions. The only alternative before Boyle is to pursue them by turns. When he succeeds in compelling one of them to the central point the other is off.

Boyle in this predicament is likened to a poor woman dwelling in a small cottage and earning just enough to keep her body and soul together by plying hard her spinning wheel. Now suppose her fowls feeding on the neighbouring unenclosed waste

land not in a compact body but scattered all over. The lonely woman runs round the common and does her best to bring the fowls to the central point but they still straggle and cause their owner immense bother. They produce loud clucking noise and fly about the plain. The picture is masteful and is done to the minutest detail. The pictorial effect and charm of Swift's similes are very remarkable indeed.

Boyle found himself in the position of this woman. He gave the chase to both Bentley and Wotton but by turns, for they were fleeing in different directions. When he succeeded in compelling one to the central point the other would be off, and *vice versa*. Great was the confusion and nervous fear of both friends.

The simile of the woman is Homeric. The idea of her getting a painful livelihood by spinning is also Homeric. The woman's getting a painful livelihood by spinning has little connection with the comparison instituted. It would not be excused unless it were done after the manner of a classic authority like Homer's. But the beauty of the simile lies in the live and lively picture created by Swift.

their flight was vain—it was no use their taking to their heels. *vain*—useless ; there was no escape.

phalax—line of battle ; *i.e.*, in a fighting posture, the two together.

First B-ntl-y threw a spear with all his force—reference is to Bentley's first *Dissertation* (1697).

clapped on—put or placed quickly or energetically. *one*—*i.e.*, point.

dead bang—soundless blow. *blunted*—dulled ; rendered less sharp or sunsitive.

observing well his time—taking time (opportunity) by the forelock.

wondrous—wonderful ; very great.

compacted—joined together.

wheeled—turned. *him*—himself.

with unusual force darted the weapon—*i.e.*, Boyle's *Examination* which was a reply mainly to Bentley's *Dissertation*, as well as, incidentally, to Wotton's *Reflections*.

fate—death. Used in this sense in *Death the Leveller* :

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armour against *fate* :
Death lays his icy hand on kings.

flanking down—so as to form a sort of protection for the body.

spent its force—exhausted itself.

to sustain—to assist ; to support ; to bear.

shared his fate—was similarly pierced and done to death.

trussed—fastened wings etc. before cooking.

a brace—pair ; couple *woodcocks*—kind of game bird related to snipe

iron skewer—pin of iron for holding meat compactly together while cooking.

pinioned—fastened ; bound.

transfix'd—pierced with lance.

Charon—in Greek mythology, the ferryman of Hades, who, for an obol, ferried the souls of the dead over the rivers Styx and Acheron to the infernal regions. It was usual among the ancients to place a piece of money under the tongue of the deceased for the purpose of this payment.

waft them—ferry them.

Styx—a river of Hades on the lower world over which the souls of the departed were ferried by Charon.

can make you—*i.e.*, happy and immortal.

Lines... ..*As when a skilful cook*.......... *for half his face.*

Explanation. *The Battle of the Books*, Swift's first notable satire, comes to a close almost with this epic simile. Of all the similes scattered throughout the concluding episode of the *Battle*, this one is the most celebrated, the most forceful and effective, the most telling in a sense, Boyle, with a lance 'of wondrous

length and sharpness' has pierced the bodies of both Bentley and Wotton together. In other words the same lance has transfixed the bodies of the two friends and they are fastened. compactly together. The scene is made more clear by means of a comparison.

An expert cook fastens the wings etc. of two wood-cocks before cooking. By means of an iron pin he pierces the tend r sides of both, binding their legs and wings close to the ma^e^n bodies. In fine the two birds appear to be of a piece. In the same way the two friends Bentley and Wotton are pierced by Boyle with his lance. Bentley and Wotton are likened to the two woodcocks. The lance is likened to the iron skewer. The veteran cook is Boyle. The two friends were close together while alive. After they are dead, they are tied so close and compact that Charon, the ferryman, in Greek mythology, who ferried the souls of the dead over the river Styx for an obol each, will mistake the two bodies to be one and under that misconception ferry the two for half his fare.

Boyle's *Examination* was a rejoinder to Bentley's *Dissertation*, but also incidentally to Wotton's *Reflections*. That is the meaning of Boyle's lance transfixing Bentley and Wotton together.

wit and eloquence—evinced by Swift in *The Battle of the Books* which has attained immortality in the realm of letters. Whereas the controversy is dismissed today as a trivility and Boyles, Bentleys and Wottons have all gone into oblivision, Swift's *Battle* still live as long as the English language is spoken, read or written.

Desunt caetera—Desunt (lacking ; missing) *Caetera* (the remaining parts). That is, the remaining parts of the manuscript are lacking.

Important Questions
ON
JONATHAN SWIFT

Q. 1. Consider Swift as a satirist.

Or

Examine Swift's claim to be considered 'the greatest English prose satirist.'

Or

Swift is the greatest and most terrible of prose satirists in English language. Illustrate

Q. 2. "Irony is the chief medium of Swift's satire."

Discuss this statement with reference to *The Battle of Books.*

Or

Write an essay on Swift as a master of irony and of parody with special reference to *The Battle of the Books*.

Or

Examine with suitable illustrations the nature and power of Swift's irony.

Or

"The most powerful weapon in Swift's armoury was his irony." Discuss.

Q. 3. Discuss the major qualities of Swit's prose style.

Or

Discuss the contribution of Swift to the development of English prose.

Or

Write an essay on the literary importance of Swift.

Or

What are Swift's claims to be thought of as a great writer of prose.

Q. 4. Write an essay on Swift as an allegorist.

Or

Give a critical and illustrative account of Swift as an allegorist.

Q. 5. "His better genius was his spleen." Elucidate this remark with reference to the quality and achievement of Swift's wit.

Q. 6. State and account for Swift's attitude towards contemporary literary controversies.

Q. 7. Say all you can in defence of Swif.'s alleged misanthropy.

Or

What exactly is Swift—a cynic, a pessimist, or a misanthrope? Illustrate your answer.

Or

"The origin of Swift's satire was in his misanthropy." How?

Q. 8. Was there a lighter side to Swift's nature? Substantiate your answer with illustrations.

Q. 9 Would you like to be a Joseph Addison or a Jonathan Swift? Give reasons in support of your choice.

Q. 10. 'The greatest genius of the 18th century England' —that is what some of his contemporaries thought of Swift. Do you agree? If so, why?

Or

Write an essay on Swift's place in the literature of his country.

Important Questions

ON

THE BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

Q. 1. What were the circumstances in which *The Battle of the Books* was written? Examine it as a mock-heroic.

Q. 2. Comment upon the ingenuity with which Swift works out the details of the allegory in *The Battle of the Books*.

Q. 3. "Swift's *The Battle of the Books* is a satire on Ancient Modern controversy rather than a contribution to it." Discuss.

Q. 4. Give an exposition of the allegory of the Spider and the Bee. What light does this allegory throw on the main theme of *The Battle of the Books*.

Q. 5. Describe, with your critical comments, the fight in *The Battle of the Books*.

Q. 7. Examine Swift's claim to have written, "being possessed of all qualifications requisite in an Historian and

retained by neither party", a full and impartial account of the controversy of scholars.

Q. 8. Examine the mock-epic features of *The Battle of the Books.*

Q 9. Explaining briefly the allegory of the fable of Spider and the Bee, discuss the relevancy of the fable to the story of the controversy between the Ancients and the Moderns.

Q. 10. Consider critically the use of the supernatural machinery in *The Battle of the Books.*

11. Study *The Battle of the Books* as a mock-heroic, and add a brief note on its genesis.

Q. 12. What tendency of Swift's own taste is reflected in *The Battle of the Books* ?

Q. 13. In what respects is *The Battle of the Books* most representative of all Swift's writings ?

Q. 14. Write a brief commentary on the dialogue between the spider and the bee.

Q. 15. Give your impression of *The Battle of the Books* as an adventure in literary criticism.

Q. 16. Trace and comment upon the circumstances which led Swift to interfere in the literary conflict which forms the basis of *The Battle of the Books.*

Q. 17. Describe and elucidate the encounter between Virgil and Dryden in the *Battle.* Do you consider this an adequate and fair criticism of Dryden as a literary artist ?

Q. 18. Consider *The Battle of the Books* as a typical example of Swift's satire. In what way does the *Battle* represent Swift's method as a controversialist ?

Q. 19. Trace the sources of *The Battle of the Book.* Also say something about its origin-cum-occasion.

Q. 20. Give in simple prose a synopsis of *The Battle of the Books.*

Q. 21. Refer the following passages to their contexts and bring out their meanings in simple modern English :—

(*a*) So that, in short, the question comes all to this: whether is the nobler being of the two, that which by a lazy contemplation of four inches round, by an overweening pride, feeding and engendering on itself, turns all into excrement and venom, producing nothing at all but flybane and a cobweb; or that which, by a universal range, with long search, much study, true judgment, and distinction of things, brings home honey and wax.

(*b*) As for us, the Ancients, we are content with the bee, to pretend to nothing of our own, beyond our wings and our voice, that is to say, our flights and our language. For the rest, whatever we have got, has been by infinite labour and search, and ranging through every corner of nature; the difference is, that, instead of dirt and poison, we have rather chosen to fill our hives with honey and wax, thus furnishing mankind with the two noblest of things, which are sweetness and light.

(*c*) Now, it must here be understood, that ink is the great missive weapon, in all battles of the learned, which conveyed through a sort of engine, called a quill, infinite numbers of these are darted at the enemy, by the valiant on each side, with equal skill and violence, as if it were an engagement of porcupines.

(*d*) As when a skilful cook has truss'd a brace of woodcocks, he with an iron skewer, pierces the tender sides of both, their legs and wings close pinioned to their ribs; so was this pair of friends transfixed, till down they fell, join'd in their lives, join'd in their deaths, so closely joined that Charon would mistake them for one, and waft them over Styx for half his fare.

(*e*) ....born to no possession of your own, but a pair of wings and a drone-pipe. Your livelihood is a universal plunder upon nature; a freebooter over fields and gardens: and for the sake of stealing, will rob a nettle as easily as a violet. Whereas I am a domestic animal, furnished with a native stock within myself. This large castle (to show my improvements in the mathematics) is all built with my own hands, and the materials extracted altogether out of my own person.

(*f*) This malignant liquor was compounded, by the engineer who invented it, of two ingredients, which are gall and copperas; bitterness and venom to suit, in some degree, as well as to foment, the genius of the combatants.

(*g*) The brave ancient suddenly started, as one possessed with surprise and disappointment together; for the helmet was nine times too large for the head, which appeared situate far in the hinder part, even like the lady in a lobster.

(*h*) In that building of yours there might, for aught I know, have been labour and method enough; but by woeful experience for us both, it is too plain, the materials are naught: and I hope you will henceforth take warning, and consider duration and matter, as well as method and art.

(*i*) Others affirmed, he had a humour to pick the worms out of the schoolmen, and swallow them fresh and fasting; whereof some fell upon his spleen, and some climbed up into his head, to the great perturbation of both.

(*j*) For, although no fountain on earth can compare with the clearness of Helicon; yet there lies at bottom a thick sediment of slime and mud; for so Apollo begged of Jupiter as a punishment to those who durst attempt to taste it with unhallowed lips.

(*k*) Lucan appeared upon a fiery horse of admirable shape, but headstrong, bearing the rider where he list over the field.

(*l*) As when two mongrel curs whom native greediness and domestic want provoke and join in partnership, though fearful, nightly to invade the folds to some rich grazier, they, with tails depressed, and lolling tongues, creep soft and slow; meanwhile, the conscious moon, now in her zenith, on their guilty heads darts perpendicular rays; nor dare they bark, though much provoked at her refulgent visage, whether seen in puddle by reflection, or in sphere direct; but one surveys the region round, while t' other scouts the plain, if haply to discover, at distance from the flock, some carcass half devoured, the refuse of gorged wolves, or ominous ravens. So marched this lovely, loving pair of friends......... .

(*m*) There is a brain that will endure but one scumming; let the owner gather it with discretion, and manage his little stock with husbandry: but, of all things, let him beware of bringing it under the lash of his betters, because that will make it all bubble up into impertinence, and he will find no new supply.

(*n*) As a young lion in the Libyan plains or Araby desert,

sent by his aged sire to hunt for prey, or health, or exercise, he scours along, wishing to meet some tiger from the mountains, or a furious boar ; if chance, a wild ass with brayings importune, affronts his ear, the generous beast, though loathing to distain his claws with blood so vile, yet much provoked at the offensive noise which Echo, foolish nymph, like her ill-judging sex, repeats much louder, and with more delight than Philomela's song, he vindicates the honour of the forest, and hunts the noisy long-eared animal. So W-tt-n fled, so Boyle pursued.

(*o*) Wit, without knowledge, being a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and, by a skilful hand, may be soon whipped into froth ; but, once scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing but to be thrown to the hogs.

(*p*) ....and, as a woman in a little house that gets a painful livelihood by spinning, if chance her geese be scattered o'er the common, she courses round the plain from side to side, compelling here and there the stragglers to the flock ; they cackle loud, and flutter o'er the champaign. So Boyle pursued, so fled this pair of friends.

(*q*) Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own ; which is the chief reason for that kind reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it......for anger and fury, though they add strength to the sinews of the body, yet are found to relax those of the mind, and to render all its efforts feeble and impotent.